

4

G-D'S RETURN WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM EXILE (CONT.)

D'var Malchus | Likkutei Sichos Vol. 9, pg. 175-183

6

WHAT DID WE BRING HOME FROM TISHREI?

Thought | Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

12

MIRACLE CHILDREN OF PRAYER

Feature | Ofra Badosa

16

SUCCESS IN BRINGING JEWS CLOSER TO TORAH AND MITZVOS

Moshiach & Geula | Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo

18

LIKUD (UNIFICATION) OF ALL JEWS AROUND THE TORAH

Feature | Avrohom Rainitz

24

SHLICHUS DIARY: SRI LANKA

Shlichus | Zev Crombie

28

LIFE WITH THE MIRACLES OF THE REBBE

Profile | Nosson Avrohom

37

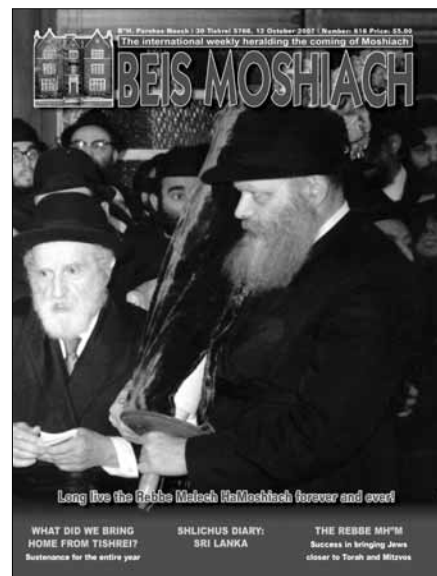
POST-TISHREI MUSINGS

Shlichus | Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz

40

THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

Story | Menachem Ziegelboim



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G-D'S RETURN WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE FROM EXILE

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 9, pg. 175-183
Translated by Boruch Merkur

[Continued from last issue]

8. Still we must understand the following. All matters are determined by Divine **particular** providence [i.e., every single detail of events, regardless of how minute and seemingly insignificant – even, for example, the number of times a leaf turns over in the wind as it falls to the ground – is under the supervision and determination of G-d]. Thus, also regarding the “gentile nations” (for example, the Ammonite people, mentioned above) there is Divine **particular** providence, (that is, not only will the nation (of Amon) in general be returned from exile, but also) determining **which** people of the nation (of Amon) will be redeemed and in what manner. Therefore, it follows, at first glance, that “hold[ing] the hand of every single person” must also apply to the “gentile nations.”

This matter will be clarified by analyzing two diverging streams of thought regarding how far – or to what degree of detail – Divine providence extends. The opinion of Rambam⁴¹ is that Divine providence only extends to human beings. In seeming contrast with the Rambam's view is that of the Baal Shem Tov, who opines that Divine providence applies even to the mineral kingdom,

as well as the plant and animal kingdom. However, the following well known insight of Chassidus⁴² resolves the two approaches, explaining how the statement of the Rambam actually does not contradict the approach of the Baal Shem Tov.⁴³

There are two **general** manners of providence from Above: a) as it is plainly revealed, b) as it is clothed within the concealment and the garments of nature, and the like. Rambam's statement – that there is no Divine providence over the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms – only applies to the revealed providence from On High. [That is, only man is governed by revealed Divine providence, whereas the concealed providence from G-d applies to everything.]

Accordingly we can understand why it is said specifically regarding the Jewish people that G-d will “hold the hand of every single person,” notwithstanding the fact that also regarding the exiles of the “gentile nations” it is certain that providence determines **whom**

among them will be redeemed and in what manner. Namely, because the providence that is upon the individual people of the gentile nations is concealed within the garments of nature in a manner that **exemplifies** the providence extended to the mineral, plant, and animal kingdoms,⁴⁴ being that “You [the Jewish people] are called ‘man,’ but gentile nations are not called ‘man.’”⁴⁵

Of consequence, when we are speaking about “(He) will return” or “I shall return,” which indicate an action that is **overtly recognized** as being performed by **G-d** (as discussed above, at the end of Section 6), the following distinction applies. “I shall return,” referring to the “Ammonite people,” is only regarding the nation in general. Whereas, with regard to the Jewish people, the “(He) will return” also applies to every Jew as an individual (since with regard to every single Jew it is said, “G-d, **your** L-rd” (*Havaya Elokecha*) in the singular⁴⁶ [not the plural, “*Havaya Elokeichem*”]) – “He personally needs to **literally** hold the hand of **every single person**... ‘You, the Jewish people, shall be gathered **one by one**.’”

Divine particular providence extends to the Jewish people **always**, even amidst the time of exile. However, during the time of the darkness of exile, intellectual contemplation is required to perceive this Divine providence, which was not the case at the time when the Temple stood nor will it be so of the [future Era of] Redemption.

Thus, with regard to the concept of redemption, it is “**literally** [that He] hold[s] the hand” (without any concealment), whereas regarding exile it says, “He will not fail [to grasp you with His hands],” mentioning only “His hands” [not the word “literally,” indicating a concealment of Divine providence].

The latter explanation also sheds light on the use of the word “literally,” as follows. The Divine providence of “[He] hold[s] the hand,” which is invested within the garments of nature, also applies to the “Ammonite people,” however, without mention of “literally” [a term reserved for the Jewish people, indicating that the Divine providence that extends to Jews is without any concealment].

9. Expressed in the lexicon of the “wine of the Torah” [i.e., the inner, mystical dimension of the Torah]:

According to the above discussion, it is still difficult to understand: Since regarding the ingathering of the Jewish

exiles, every individual Jew is significant in the eyes of G-d, it follows that until the **last** Jew is redeemed, the Divine Presence remains, as it were, “amidst the suffering of their exile.” Thus, the following question emerges: How can it be said that G-d redeems the Jewish people in a manner of “hold[ing] the hand of **every single person**,” for at the time when He “literally hold[s] the hand,” saving a Jew from exile, in a manner of “**(He) will return** (with) your captivity,” He is saved together with the first Jew from exile?!

We must, therefore, say that the level regarding which it says, “He...hold[s] the hand of every single person,” is [only] a contracted and individualized emanation of G-dliness, which, so to speak, is connected with and becomes apportioned to^{46*} every individual Jew. Thus, it is possible that the specific Divine emanation connected with an individual Jew (whom G-d holds literally by the hand) should go out of exile, notwithstanding the fact that other Jews remain in exile.⁴⁷ Whereas, the redemption of the aspect of the very **root** [or essence] of the Divine Presence (*ikar Sh’china*), which **transcends** division, will only occur when **all** Jews are redeemed.

In fact, the latter point is alluded to in Rashi’s saying, “But He has inscribed redemption for Himself when they are to be redeemed,” as follows. The redemption “**for Himself**” (*l’Atzmo*) (the Divine Essence (*Atzmus*)) will take place “when they are to be redeemed” (“they,” in the plural), when **all** the Jewish people are redeemed. And as Rashi emphasizes also with the expression, “for He will return with them,” as mentioned above at the end of Section 5.

[To be continued be”H]

NOTES:

41 *A Guide to the Perplexed* 3:17.

42 *D”Ch* 13a.

43 See *Likkutei Dibburim* Vol. 1, pg. 166 ff; *HaYom Yom* pg. 108; among others.

44 See *A Guide to the Perplexed* *ibid* Ch. 18.

45 *Yevamos* 61a, beg.

46 See Footnote 46 in the original.

46* Similar to the “second soul” that exists within every single person [i.e., Jew] “a literal portion of G-d from above” (*Tanya* Ch. 2, beg. See glosses of the Tzemach Tzedek there, *Igeres HaKodesh* Section 7, among others).

47 See Footnote 47 in the original.

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WHAT DID WE BRING HOME FROM TISHREI?

By Rabbi Chaim Ashkenazi

The month of Tishrei is likened to an annual fair, where the merchants earn sustenance for an entire year. Now that we have returned home from the fair, the members of the household ask: What did you buy at the fair? What did you bring home? What merchandise did you pick up in order to sustain us throughout the entire year?



Having celebrated the month of Tishrei to the fullest, we ask ourselves what have we gotten out of the month replete with days of awe – Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur – and holidays of joy – Sukkos and Simchas Torah?

The month of Tishrei is likened to an annual fair, where the merchants earn sustenance for an entire year. Now that we have returned home from the fair, the members of the household ask: What did you buy at the fair? What did you bring home? What merchandise did you pick up in order to sustain us throughout the entire year?

Let us review what took place at the fair and even before that – from when we prepared to go to the fair in the month of Elul.

We heard from the Alter Rebbe

(with explanations from the Rebbeim and numerous explanations from the Rebbe MH”M) that in the month of Elul the king is in the field. We are city people and not people of the desert, where nothing worthwhile grows and there are snakes and scorpions. Nor are we people of the field. A field has the advantage in that it produces our food, but we are there only for the avodas ha’birurim and not because a field is our place per se.

Since the king is in the field, we need to go out and greet him. Why do we want to do this when he is not wearing his royal garments? Because we know that this is the king, because we are **city people**.

Why does the king go to the field? Because he wants to lift us up so that we do not remain mere city people but are deserving of entering

the royal palace which occurs on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur. Afterwards, on Sukkos, the king embraces us: “His right hand embraces me.” This is expressed with our presence in the sukka, which has at least two complete walls, as the halacha requires, and one wall that is at least a hand’s-breadth wide. This is like the form of an arm which has two larger sections and the palm of the hand.

Then, on Simchas Torah, Hashem says, “come and partake, you and I.” Or, as the Zohar puts it, “I and the King alone,” as alluded to in the Musaf sacrifice of the day of **one** ox and **one** ram, corresponding to the Jewish people (as opposed to the seventy oxen that are sacrificed on Sukkos to correspond to the seventy nations).

We experienced this at the fair,

and the impression of these experiences, which are etched deep within us, is what we acquired at the fair and what we bring home.

WE ARE CITY PEOPLE!

What is the profit that we make on the merchandise? How do we benefit by being city people who were invited to the king's palace and have memories of being close to him?

An anecdote of a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe will help us understand this. The Alter Rebbe said about him that he was a Chassid as a result of pride. Every time his animal soul came to entice him to act improperly, he would say: I am a Chassid of the Alter Rebbe and such conduct is unbefitting for me!

A similar story is told about R' Asher Sossonkin a"h who sat in jail and exile in Russia and suffered greatly. His terrible suffering was apparent on his face to the point that when he went to the Rebbe for the first time for yechidus, the Rebbe stood up for him, and R' Asher burst into tears (because Chassidim who felt that the Rebbe was mekarev them saw this as an indication that they were spiritually distant, which is why the Rebbe had to be mekarev them).

When R' Asher asked why the Rebbe stood up, the Rebbe answered: What should I do when

you look older than your father (R' Shmaryahu Sossonkin a"h)?

When R' Asher was asked how he withstood his ordeals, he said that after repeated interrogations he felt he couldn't take it anymore and he wanted to die. Suddenly the gentile interrogator said: Why are you denying it? We know you are a Chassid of the Lubavitcher!

These words infused R' Asher with strength as he thought: Even the goy says I'm a Chassid, so why should I be fazed by what I am experiencing?

This is what enabled R' Asher to survive throughout his imprisonment.

Based on these stories, we can answer our question. When we return to work, whether to the Chabad house or whatever mosad one works at, whether back to yeshiva or to one's business, we meet Eisav, the man of the field.

Regarding this encounter the Torah says, "He found her in the field, the girl cried out and nobody came to help her." There is nobody to rely on for help in a field. The only thing that can help under these circumstances is the knowledge that we are city people. In fact, we are even greater than that, for we have entered the king's palace.

Our visiting the king was with great honor. (Unlike the person who boasted that he had spoken to the

king and when he was asked what the king said, he answered that he once stumbled into the palace garden and when the king saw him he screamed: Get out of here before I order you killed!) The king embraced us and took each of us to the inner sanctum for a private talk. So what do we have to do with Eisav?

We don't relate to him! Eisav is making a big mistake when he sees us in the field and tries to entice us with his wiles. We are there only in order to grow our food, i.e., to extract from the earth sparks of holiness. Our connection to the field is incidental!

I PLACE HIM BEFORE ME, CONSTANTLY

I met a Chassid in 770 and asked him when he had come. I had meant to ask when he had arrived at 770, but he answered me: I am here for forty years!

I was taken aback since I know him from Eretz Yisroel, where he lives. He said: My body travels back and forth, but my soul is always here!

This perspective is reminiscent of the Rebbe's explanation of the Rashi about Yaakov sending messengers to Eisav. Rashi says they were *malachim mamash* (actually angels). The Rebbe says that Yaakov only sent the "*mamash*" (the "material," superficial



component of the angels) to Eisav and not their soul, which he retained.

Our entire outlook on life needs to be that just our bodies go out to the field, while the nefesh remains elevated and united with the King as he is in his palace in the city.

The Alter Rebbe writes at the beginning of his *Shulchan Aruch* (a book that outlines a person's entire way of life) that the words of the verse, "I place Hashem before me constantly" appear at the beginning of the *Shulchan Aruch* because man's behavior when he is alone is not the same as it is when he is with other people, all the more so with a king. This information of knowing before whom you stand and the level that you are on enable you to fulfill the *Shulchan Aruch*.

In Chabad shuls we don't have signs that say, "Know Before Whom you Stand" because this should be engraved in our minds and hearts throughout our lives, not just on a sign that we see in shul. If we don't constantly remember this, we can think that since we are in the field, our fellow "men of the field" are our friends. When we enter shul we temporarily drop them, letting them know we'll be back soon.

Our true standing as men of the city and the king's friend ought to be a constant thought, and then every action or thought or word in the field will be done as is fitting for a man of the city. If we are permeated with the sense of our lofty level, we can avoid enticements from the start, because we have refined our animal souls. In other words, certain inappropriate things will simply be out of the question.

Most people haven't reached this level, so at least, when enticed, we need to remember where we come from and before whom we stand.

THE NESHAMA YOU GAVE ME IS PURE

This idea must be something we

are aware of from the moment we get up in the morning. When we say, every morning, "the neshama You gave me is pure," we are emphasizing that it is pure *now*, not only when it was in the treasury of souls up above. Even after Hashem put it in a physical body, it remains pure, as the Alter Rebbe says that the word "*tehora*" (pure) is like, "*k'etzem ha'Shamayim l'tohar*" (like the essence of the sky in its purity). That is, just as when the sky is clear with not even a wisp of a cloud, so too, there is nothing that can mar the neshama's connection to the Creator.

From the moment we open our eyes in the morning, the words in the davening remind us that we are still city people. And not just any city people, but people who are close to the king – "I and the king alone."

This approach is important for every one of us. If you are in yeshiva, every moment must be permeated with the awareness that you are a city person, and your thoughts, speech, and action – whether while learning or during the breaks, whether eating and sleeping or shopping – need to be appropriate.

If you are a businessman, then all your dealings and involvement with people need to be done with this premise in mind, "the soul You gave me is pure." Your lifestyle and home, your furnishings and clothing, the talk and actions in your home, all need to be appropriate.

There's a story brought in the sichos about a Chassid who needed money to marry off his daughter. He went to his rich brother who had a large house with many rooms. The wealthy brother was proud to show off his wealth. After the grand tour, the Chassid said to his brother: There's an animal that lives in excrement up to its nose that wishes it could also cover its head in it... You are immersed in material things and are happy with it all. If you are

willing to help me, fine, and if not, goodbye!

Presumably the rich brother earned his money honestly, so why did his poor brother respond this way? The answer is that if you are a city person, you have a minimal connection with the field. If you take pride in the field, then you are not a city person!

Thus, the Chassid's battle is not to lose his true identity. There is the parable of the Baal Shem Tov about the prince who was sent far away from the king, who forgot his origins. When he heard that the king was coming, he went out to greet him but nobody recognized him since he looked like all the other men of the field. It was only his cry, "Father, father, save me!" that the king recognized.

The cry of the prince emanated from the depth of the soul that "is pure" even after it is sent into exile within the physical body in this world.

HOW THE KING BEHAVES

There is a story of a talmid of Tomchei T'mimim in Lubavitch who married and moved far away. A few years later he went to Lubavitch and the T'mimim there marveled that even though years had passed since he had been in yeshiva, he had remained strong in his Chassidishe behavior as he had as a bachur. In other words, he had remained a city person.

This is why Chassidim try to copy the Rebbe's behavior. The customs, in addition to laws, were given to Moshe at Sinai, as gifts by the angels. They are to show how a city person behaves. Certainly, the conduct of our king, the Rebbe – during davening and doing mitzvos, his mode of dress, etc. – is a model for us.

It's sad to see T'mimim and married men not wearing the kind of

yarmulkes that the Rebbe wore, or white shirts, Chassidishe haircuts, etc. Instead of following the Rebbe, they follow the non-Jews, or in a better case scenario, they follow balabatim who forgot they are city people.

They tell of a Chassid who was a merchant and dressed like one. When he went to the Rebbe, he changed into Chassidishe clothing. One time he decided not to be a hypocrite and he went to the Rebbe dressed in his usual clothes. The Rebbe said: I thought you were in essence a **Chassid**, and you wore different clothing for the purpose of doing business. Now I see that you are in essence a **merchant** ... In other words, you are not a city person.

HOW WE WILL APPEAR AT THE WEDDING

This is all the more pertinent in our generation of Geula, in which the reality that we are city people is an indelible fact whether we feel it or not. We are about to see how Hashem embraces every single Jew.

We don't have a choice as to whether to continue to act as a man of the field or not because to Hashem, we are city people, as it says, "for your sins separate between you and G-d," and not "between G-d and you." The challenge is for us to act accordingly so that when we see how we are embraced by G-d, we won't feel uncomfortable about where we stand.

There's the story of the Satan causing a fight between two brothers which caused them to become estranged. Then one brother made a wedding for his daughter and wanted his brother to come but the brother was not interested in participating and he put on pajamas and went to bed and pulled the cover over his head so he wouldn't hear the music.

The musicians noticed that the

bride's father was unhappy and when he told them about his brother who hadn't attended the wedding, one of the musicians promised to bring him. This musician went to the brother's house and presented himself as a hungry passerby. As a sign of his appreciation for the meal he was served, he played a tune on his fiddle. His host was drawn after the musician as after the Pied Piper and as the musician neared the wedding hall, the man followed him until he reunited with his brother and they hugged. It was only after they had calmed down somewhat that the brother realized he was still wearing his pajamas.

The grand wedding between Hashem and His people is about to begin. All that remains to be done is to see how we will look the moment we find ourselves in the king's palace. Will we be dressed properly with a beard and peios and proper haircut? What about our family members? Our preparations must be all encompassing – as the well known comparison to Sukkos, when everything we have is in the Sukka, all our involvements, eating, drinking, etc. – everything must be devoted to and embraced by Hashem.

A SPECIAL GIFT FOR THOSE WHO LEARN CHASSIDUS

The ability to prepare in the months of Elul and Tishrei, at a time of spiritual elevation, which raises us up above the reality of the lowly world and enables us to view the field from the perspective of a city person, is the chiddush we have thanks to the revelation of Chassidus.

How does a Jew look at the end of Tishrei when he does not have the teachings of Chassidus? What does he have from all of Tishrei? He merited pardon and forgiveness at

When R' Asher was asked how he withstood his ordeals, he said that after repeated interrogations he felt he couldn't take it anymore and he wanted to die. Suddenly the gentile interrogator said: Why are you denying it? We know you are a Chassid of the Lubavitcher! These words infused R' Asher with strength as he thought: Even the goy says I'm a Chassid, so why should I be fazed by what I am experiencing?

the beginning of the month and is able to open a new page in his connection with Hashem. Then he is happy and dances on Sukkos and Simchas Torah. Then what?

***Our preparations
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What changed in his awareness as opposed to before? Did anything change or does he remain on the same level as before albeit minus his

sins, which is a very great thing but, bottom line – he returns to what he was?

From what we have learned in Chassidus, our visit to the fair in Tishrei defines our identity. As a Jew who is beloved to Hashem, we have merchandise with which to set out on our way.

The custom in Lubavitch is to announce on Motzaei Shabbos B'Reishis, "and Yaakov went on his way." The Jew is no longer **Yisroel** – an obvious city person as he was during Tishrei, but reverted to being **Yaakov** – he returns to the field. Even if he is a ben Torah and sits and learns, he is still in the field, in this world which embraces him in a bear hug with all its enticements. If he stopped learning for a moment, he would feel this full-force. It's just the knowledge that he is a city person that raises him up a bit above the passions of the world and gives him the ability to view all the materiality from an objective perspective.

Those in 770 for Tishrei merited to look down upon the world from the highest peak. They lived and breathed Moshiach, and saw and

heard and felt the "hinei hinei Moshiach ba."

In 770 I heard a story about a Chassid who went to the Rebbe as he stood in the doorway of his room with the key in his hand. The Chassid told the Rebbe about a boy that the doctors had given up on. The Rebbe raised his hands in a gesture of surprise and said: Since when are they in charge?

The Chassid said: So the Rebbe should give a bracha.

The Rebbe said: If it depends on me, I give all the brachos.

The Chassid said: So there is no reason to worry?

The Rebbe said: To worry? You need to worry about just one thing – when will Moshiach come?

This is what we have returned with from the king's palace. We have but one worry on our minds – where is Moshiach?

From this perspective, the world looks exceedingly small and it really doesn't pay to get too excited about it when we know that we will imminently see our king, Moshiach, in all his glory.

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Keren Hashono

Ato Horeiso

שיחי' To All Of Anash And Tmimim

The Rebbe was accustomed to request after the selling of the Pesukim of "Ato Hereiso" that the following should be announced "Your word to Hashem is equal to physically giving to a person."

In many of his Sichos the Rebbe recalled words of the Alter Rebbe concerning the greatness of the quality of alacrity in all matters pertaining to Torah and Mitzvohs, especially regarding the Mitzvah of Tzedaka, he stressed, that one should act as quickly as possible.

In keeping with this dictum we wish to remind all those who had the merit of buying a Posuk of Ato Hereiso this Simchas Torah for the Merkos (which is under the leadership of Rabbi S.M. Simpson in accordance with the Rebbe's instructions) to bring their pledge in as expeditiously as possible to the offices of either Rabbi Simpson or Rabbi Groner or to send in their pledge to the address below.

Keren Hashono: A special tzedoko fund which the Rebbe established in 5714, from which tzedoko is given twice a day (except Shabbos and Yomtov), before Shacharis and before Mincha> This assures that all participants in this fund, fulfill the mitzvo of tzedoko twice a day. One is to contribute sums in the amount of days of the coming year. This year, 5768 has 383 days. The sums can be in pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, dollars etc., for each member of the family.

May giving of this Tzedaka speed the coming of the full Geulah through the revelation of Melech Hamoshiach.

VAAD KUPAS RABBEINU

Rabbi S.M. Simpson

Rabbi Y.L. Groner

P.S. Based on the Rebbe's Sichos those individuals who were not able to buy a Posuk on Simchas Torah can still participate by sending their donations now. Pidyon money etc. can also be sent to the above.

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MIRACLE CHILDREN OF PRAYER

By Ofra Badosa

FARBRENGEN OF MIRACLES

Tishrei 5764. Hundreds of girls of all types and backgrounds filled 770, born and bred Lubavitchers alongside baalos t'shuva, young and old. That year there were quite a few baalos t'shuva from the schools that cater to them. A group of them, most over thirty, decided to get together and farbreng. There was the feeling that they needed their own place with a focus on their issues.

I took it upon myself to organize a farbrengen for them. For an entire morning I tried to find the right person to farbreng with them. I wanted a woman, someone who would help us get more in touch with ourselves, Hashem, and the Rebbe. We wanted fire in this farbrengen!

Before Mincha I noticed Rus Mipai [see issue #546 for an interview with her] talking with some girls. That's when it hit me that she was the perfect person to farbreng with us. After a brief conversation we had arranged a time and place: Monday at three o'clock in Rubashkin's sukka.

Rus: "It was a very special farbrengen with lots of achdus and love. We spoke mainly about the power of prayer and about how 'whoever prays for his fellow for something that he himself needs, he is answered first.'

"Most of the girls were relatively

older and single and there was a feeling that something in Heaven had to be opened for them. At the end of the farbrengen we resolved that everybody would daven for all the other girls at candle-lighting. The Rebbe's response in the *Igros Kodesh* related directly to the farbrengen as though he was there! He gave blessings and chizuk to the girls. The most amazing thing of all was that the following year, about 85% of the girls married!"

THE FIRST GROUP

Still feeling the profound impressions of Tishrei with the Rebbe as well as this special farbrengen, Rus went back to Eretz Yisroel. When she sat down to ponder her good resolution for the new year, she knew that she wanted to continue the work that was connected with strength in prayer.

What could be better than having a group for women who did not yet have any children?

In these situations, prayer is needed more than in any other situation. It was just at this time that Ohr B'Lev (which is a volunteer organization that has workshops for parents and marital advice, in memory of Rus' mother) wanted to expand its activities. And so, the first group was started in Bareket with 15 women, aged 25-50. Their success was unparalleled! 14 women had children and the 15th continued with another group and then had a

baby.

Rus: "It was my first encounter with Hashem on this subject and it was quite amazing. One of the women in the group gave birth to twins after 20 years and another one gave birth after 28 years! These pregnancies took place after years of fertility treatments. This gave me the push I needed to start more and more groups."

ENCOUNTERS OF ACHDUS

Within three years, about fifteen groups were started. The ladies who join these groups are all types. Some are religious, running the gamut from Chabad to Satmar, Mizrachi to Ger. There are some women who aren't yet religious.

Rus: "I lead the first three meetings in which the women are becoming acquainted. We awaken in them very deep issues that may have lain dormant for many years. It's very important to raise the problems and discuss them so as to prepare a vessel for blessing. In the first stage, most of the women feel threatened. Some of them do talk but there are others who might remain silent at most of the meetings, though in the end, they all open up. The atmosphere is very positive and supportive."

Rus has one rule which she announces at the first meeting. A woman who becomes pregnant has to leave the group. This is a rule that

the Rebbe told a similar group that consulted with him.

GIVING STRENGTH

Rus: “At the second meeting we focus on spiritual weaknesses that can cause a delay in the bracha. There are couples who try for years to have children and go to the best doctors but cannot be blessed until the spiritual blockages are dissolved. The goal of this meeting is to discuss this and to find solutions.”

Can you give an example?

“One of the most common examples has to do with the k’suba. There are many cases in which bachurim want their rosh yeshiva to be the *mesader kiddushin* (the one who officiates at the marriage). The rosh yeshiva might be wonderful as a rosh yeshiva but he might not know how to be a proper mesader kiddushin. There are many detailed halachos that must be followed in the writing of a k’suba.

“One of the dayanim that I am in touch with told me that when his daughters were married by a mesader kiddushin that he did not rely on, he changed their k’subos the next day.

“In other instances, the ring was not bought with the groom’s money. Although the rabbi asks him under the chuppa if the ring was bought with his money, the question is not always understood. Sometimes, the kalla picks the ring and pays for it. There have also been

There are many cases in which bachurim want their rosh yeshiva to be the mesader kiddushin. The rosh yeshiva might be wonderful as a rosh yeshiva but he might not know how to be a proper mesader kiddushin.

cases in which a young boy jokingly told a young girl ‘*harei at mekudeshes li.*’ If two friends nearby happened to witness this, it could be considered an actual marriage.

“Sometimes there are hard feelings like when a younger sister marries before an older sister and did not get her consent, or someone broke an engagement and did not ask and receive *mechila* (forgiveness) from the other party.”

At the third meeting, Rus leads the women with the aid of special cards designed to help disengage from negative things of the past. The women are very cooperative and thanks to the closeness and honesty among them, it is possible to resolve serious problems.

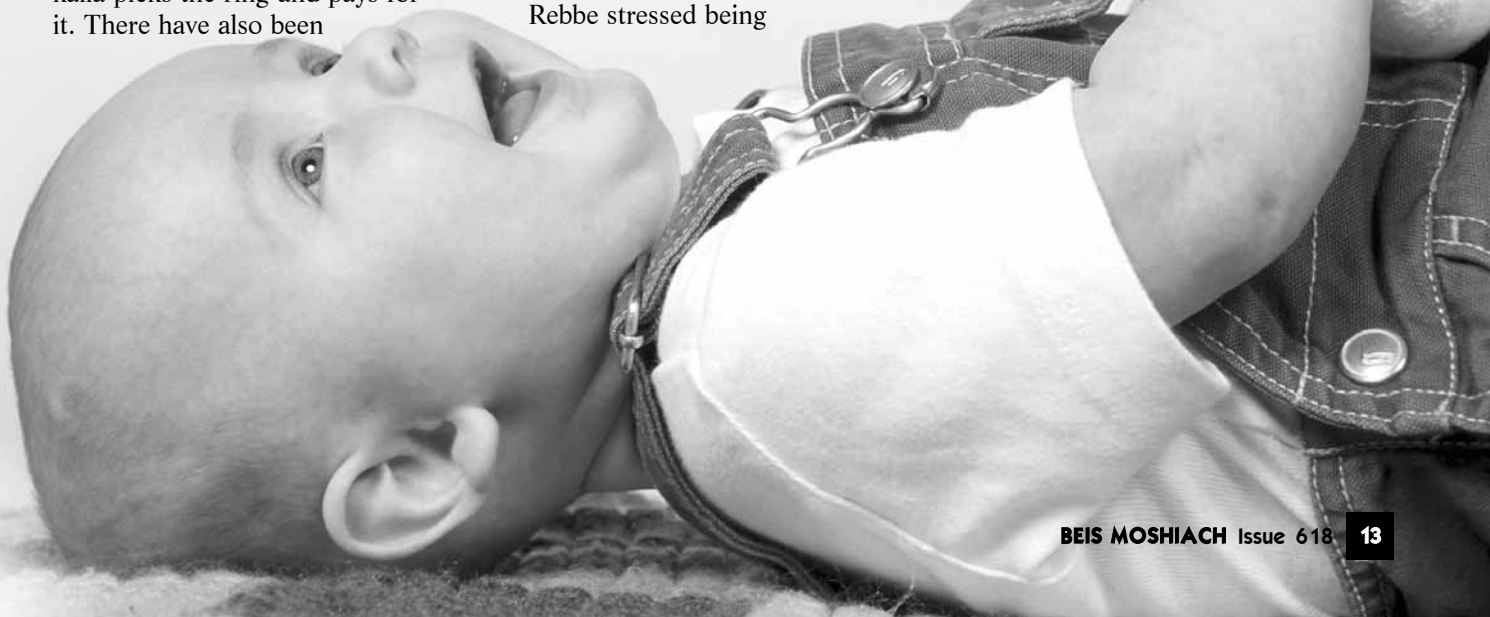
THREE PILLARS

Rus: “At all the meetings we emphasize Torah, T’filla, and Tz’daka. The Torah part consists of learning halacha. This is one of the points that is most emphasized. The Rebbe stressed being

particular with family purity in cases where couples did not have children. About ten to fifteen meetings are dedicated to a careful review of the laws of family purity with a knowledgeable teacher.

“I explain that if the Rebbe said this, then it must be so, except that it needs to be put into practice. The halachic end of things is strengthened and often the women consult with a rav regarding their fertility treatments. One of the women, after seven years of treatments, decided to contact a rav. She arranged to meet with him but before she actually met him, she was pregnant with twins. Her second birth was ten months later and the third was less than a year after the second birth.

“As for T’filla, I emphasize the power of prayer. The Rambam says that in order





to fulfill one's biblical obligation of prayer, one needs to (aside from the prayers established by the sages) talk to Hashem and tell Him your needs. There's a story in the Gemara about a man who was walking on the road and was exhausted from the heat. He prayed to Hashem and asked for a donkey.

"Before he could finish his prayer one of the king's ministers came by riding on a donkey and leading another donkey. When the minister saw him, he ordered him to carry the other donkey on his shoulders till the city. The story teaches us to be careful when we daven and to specify what we want. Obviously, Hashem knows what we want, but He takes pleasure in hearing us say it. He wants us to talk to Him."

Each of the women in the group commits to davening for a friend and her husband. She reads that woman's chapter of T'hilim and her husband reads the chapter of the other one's husband. They are strengthened in the knowledge that their prayers are accepted, that Hashem has a treasury of prayers, like a bank account, that protects them.

The Tz'daka part of the program consists of the women contributing towards Rus' travel expenses and towards the salary of the woman

who teaches them halacha.

A DAY OF PRAYER

Rus: "Last Elul, all the groups convened for a day of prayer. Women from several groups came, Satmar along with irreligious ladies, but the feeling of achdus filled the air. It's hard to describe the special atmosphere on the bus, when about fifty ladies, all of whom did not have children, united to daven. We went for Mincha at Kever Rochel, a very emotional prayer. We were all in tears and felt that our prayers rent the gates of heaven.

"We felt k'dusha and great love. Some of the women, who did not know one another at the beginning of the day, felt like sisters by the end of the day. From there we went to daven Maariv at the Kosel. Then we went to the Tzemach Tzedek shul in the Old City to hear a shiur on emuna and bitachon and the power of prayer. By the end of the day, it was hard for the women to part, as such a strong bond had been created among them."

Rus says that the most special thing about these groups is the connection formed with the Rebbe. Most of the women have no connection to Chabad or to the

Rebbe, and in the end they all connect to the Rebbe in some way or another.

At the meetings, Rus tells them stories about hiskashrus and miracles, and writing via the *Igros Kodesh*. The thing that strengthens the women the most is when they hear that women have had children. Their faith and trust that Hashem hears their prayers are strengthened. Even in the group that Rus started in Kiryat Seifer, a Litvish stronghold, the Rebbe is in the forefront, and the women accept this and even send their names with Rus when she goes to 770.

Tell us a story about the Rebbe and the *Igros Kodesh* that happened to one of the women.

Rus: "In one of the groups there was a woman who had gotten married in her forties. For ten years she had no children. She heard about the group and joined it enthusiastically. She came to every meeting and internalized the importance of writing to the Rebbe. She wrote her story to the Rebbe, about how the doctors laughed at her for still trying to have a child at her age.

"The answer she opened to said not to despair and that doctors have permission to heal but not to discourage people. The following week I was told she was pregnant."



SUCCESS IN BRINGING JEWS CLOSER TO TORAH AND MITZVOS

By Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo
Translated By Michoel Leib Dobry

In response to requests by our readers, we now present the next segment from “V’Torah Yevakshu MiPihu,” Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo’s seifer on the Rebbe’s teachings regarding Chabad chassidus, its approach to emuna, and its various customs.



Rabbi Mazuz continues: “And regarding this, the Rambam writes (Hilchos Melachim 11:4, censored in many printings): ‘And if he did not succeed to this degree (in building the Beis HaMikdash in its place and gathering in the exiles of Israel) or was killed, it is known that he is not [the Redeemer] promised by the Torah.’”

According to what was explained above (and will be elaborated on further be”H), “Moshe Rabbeinu did not die,” the Rebbe is *chai v’kayam*,

and “the event that happened...is only from our material point of view, and is only a trial (one of the trials of the birth pangs of Moshiach that must take place prior to the coming of the Righteous Redeemer), the entire purpose of which is to conceal and cover the truth.” Thus, there is no question whatsoever on the Rambam.

In any event, since these things were written for public consumption, and since not everyone can grasp and internalize the truth of this

realization, we will now explain the Rambam in a manner that everyone can understand.

First of all, we must be precise in the two possibilities the Rambam writes about: “And if he did not succeed...or was killed.” It would have been enough if he had written, “And if he dies, it is known, etc.” Moreover, why did he use the term “or was killed,” and not “or died”? The explanation is that when we consider the matter carefully, we see that the signs of “and he will compel

all Israel...and he will fight the wars of G-d," brought by the Rambam in Halacha 4, are not incidental signs (pertaining merely to identity), rather, this is the halachic description of Moshiach. This means that if there is a Jew from the House of Dovid, etc., involved in bringing the entire Jewish People closer to G-d and who fights the wars of G-d, he possesses the characteristics of Moshiach.

The Rambam then adds that if this person did not succeed in his avoda to bring the Jewish People closer to Torah and mitzvos or was killed in the wars of G-d, it is then clear that this is not the one whom the Torah has promised, because he has absolutely failed in those very things that define who Moshiach is. Similarly, we find regarding Bar Koziba, that at the moment that he was killed by his enemies as he fought the wars of G-d, this ended everything completely. (As Rambam puts it in Hilchos Taanios 5:3: "They had a great king, and all Israel and great chachamim presumed that he was Melech HaMoshiach, but [when] he fell into the hands of the Romans and all of them were killed, it was a misfortune as great as the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.")

Thus, the Rambam was specific in writing, "or **was killed**," meaning that he was killed while fighting the wars of G-d, proving that "he did not succeed to this degree."

As a result, if the situation were that the Rebbe proclaimed in 5711 that the task of our generation is to bring the Redemption, and he would begin to try and send shluchim to spread Yiddishkait and *ch"v* they wouldn't go out on shlichus, or they would go out but fail to bring Jews closer to Yiddishkait – this is called "and he did not succeed" (in the matter of the first sign of spiritual influence upon the Jewish People). Similarly, when the king is killed in

war by the victorious enemies, as was Bar Koziba, this is a proof that "he did not succeed" (in the second sign of "the wars of G-d"), and thus "he is not the one whom the Torah had promised."

However, this is not the case, because the Rebbe shlita succeeded in a wondrous manner (as much as is possible within the limits of nature, and even higher than nature) in bringing hundreds of thousands of Jews throughout the world closer to Torah (whether in accepting an observant lifestyle, fulfilling certain mitzvos, or strengthening their faith in G-d).

observance have in recent years have joined the ranks in fulfillment of the king's orders, whether they know it or not, establishing special associations for this purpose, such as Lev L'Achim, Arachim, El HaMa'ayan, Todaa, etc., all of which come from those circles that vociferously opposed the Rebbe's approach, and now have been transformed **and have begun to work on his shlichus**. Even other chassidic communities have founded outreach organizations, distribute candles to Jewish women and girls on Fridays to awaken them to the "Neshek Campaign," make seminars

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He brought the Word of G-d to millions of Jews through thousands of shluchim, striving to reach all corners of the earth with literal self-sacrifice. (We have already brought clear proofs from the seifer *Yechi HaMelech HaMoshiach* (from p. 203) that when the Rambam states that Moshiach "will compel all Israel," this means in the ways of pleasantness.) **This very concept continues today – and with greater strength and greater fortitude!**

Furthermore, **all those streams of observant Jewry that initially opposed this manner of reaching out to those far from Torah**

to bring Jews towards a path of t'shuvah, and conduct "mitvzaim" training that the Rebbe spoke to them about decades ago, when he was only "a voice in the wilderness."

It thus can be said that this represents the fulfillment of another sign that the Rambam notes regarding Moshiach, i.e., not only will he influence the Jewish People "to walk in [the path of Torah and mitzvos]," he will also compel all sectors within Jewry **"to strengthen [its observance]"** through involvement in his shlichus to bring every Jew closer to his roots.

LIKUD (UNIFICATION) OF ALL JEWS AROUND THE TORAH

By Avrohom Rainitz

*Mr. Yehoram Ben-Shalom recently visited Crown Heights. Under the Shamir government, he served as representative of the Likud movement in the US. Today he works for the United Nations as Special Adviser to WAFUNIF's President, and Coordinator of WAFUNIF's Culture of Peace activities. * Ben-Shalom tells of his association with Chabad, about the Likud ministers whom he brought to the Rebbe, and about his great admiration for the Rebbe's leadership.*

When I called Mr. Yehoram Ben-Shalom to arrange a time for an interview regarding his connection to the Rebbe, he surprised me when he said he would be spending Shabbos Slichos in Crown Heights. "The terrific bachurim from Chabad who come to our shul in Manhattan every

Shabbos, invited me for this Shabbos and I couldn't refuse." We agreed that we would talk on Motzaei Shabbos.

We began the interview precisely where Ben-Shalom's relationship began with the Rebbe — at the entrance to 770, near the Rebbe's room. Ben-Shalom was very moved

as he walked down the path that leads to the entrance to 770. He hadn't been here in many years and this visit revived pleasant memories for him.

"I remember as though it was today, that Erev Yom Kippur of 5750. Rabbi Kuti Rapp called and said, 'Yehoram, the Rebbe is giving out honey cake with a special bracha for a good, sweet year. It's worthwhile coming.'

"I was the representative of the Likud movement in the US and since I was very friendly with the Trade Attaché at the Israeli Consulate, Mr. Manny Buber, I called him and suggested that we go together to the Rebbe.

"Due to traffic, we arrived late and as our car stopped at the entrance to 770 and I saw that the area was empty, without the long line, I sadly realized that we had missed the Rebbe. Then I suddenly heard people yelling at us, 'Come quickly! The Rebbe is still waiting!'

"I ran forward and opened the door. There stood the Rebbe, smiling. Aside from secretaries, nobody else was there. It looked as though the Rebbe had been waiting especially for us. We approached the Rebbe and after he gave us lekach and a bracha, he motioned

to his secretaries that the distribution was over and he went to his room.

"I will never forget those holy moments on Erev Yom Kippur, as we stood alone facing the Rebbe, and that special smile."

LEADERSHIP WITH A WAVE OF A HAND

Yehoram Ben-Shalom was born into the world of *askanus* (communal involvement). His father, Ovadia Ben-Shalom, was president of the Yemenite community in Eretz Yisroel and chairman of the association of social and cultural development that preserved Yemenite tradition. His brother, Yigal Ben-Shalom, has worked in recent years as director of the National Insurance program.

Yehoram became acquainted with Chabad through government offices. "R' Shloimke Maidenchek would come to us before holidays and throughout the year. He checked the mezuzos and took care of other Jewish matters in the government offices."

At that time, Yehoram was special advisor to Aharon Lozen, the minister of Labor and Financial Relief, and he was also involved in campaigns to bring Jews to Israel from various countries. In 5744 was offered the position of special consul for Israeli matters in the US and he flew to New York to check it out.

"On my trip here, a delegation of young Israeli leaders came to visit the government offices in Washington. Part of the program was a private audience with the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Since I had joined the delegation, I was able to see the Rebbe too. The yechidus took place in the hallway before the Rebbe's room. I remember also once having yechidus in the Rebbe's room, as he sat at his desk, but I don't remember whether this was in

conjunction with the meeting of the delegation or another occasion.

"This was the first time I was seeing the Rebbe and from the very start I realized that he wasn't just another rabbi. He was completely different. He was a genuine Jewish leader whose words and gaze penetrated deeply into the neshama.

"After the yechidus, as the Rebbe left his room, many Chassidim were congregated on the path leading up to 770, and the Rebbe waved his hand in a gesture of simcha. The Chassidim burst



into song and danced enthusiastically in their places.

When I saw this, I was flabbergasted by the power of the Rebbe's leadership. I had never seen a leader move a crowd with a wave of his hand.

"Later on, when I became better acquainted with the Rebbe's leadership, and had attended farbrengens, my amazement grew. I saw the deep connection with the Chassidim who obeyed the Rebbe's orders without any prior conditions, despite their not receiving any

benefit thereby. It was beyond my understanding.

"Later, when I spoke with Knesset members and ministers from the Likud and told them to visit the Rebbe, some said they had seen many rabbis already and didn't feel like visiting the Rebbe. I would tell them: You have to go and see this for yourself. This is not a natural phenomenon. There is no other leader who with a wave of his hand can send people to the end of the world, to do holy work, in sub-human conditions, all to give the Rebbe nachas!"

Do you remember what the Rebbe said at that encounter?

The truth is that when I try to review my conversations with the Rebbe, I don't manage to remember them well. When I would pass by the Rebbe, I would undergo a process that is hard to explain. In my great excitement I was unable to remember what the Rebbe said to me.

In later years, when I went with Kuti Rapp, I would ask him to remember what the Rebbe said to me. In those years they also wrote down what the Rebbe said in a Chabad publication (*Chadashot Beit Chayeinu*) and thanks to that I can sit down and read through my encounters with the Rebbe. But I have no notes of the first meeting, just an awesome general impression of the Rebbe.

LIKUD IN THE U.S.

Ben-Shalom ended up refusing the job of consul for Israeli matters and took a job no less important – representing the Israeli government in its efforts to help Jews in Arab countries. In this position he developed contacts with diplomats from Arab countries in the attempt to eliminate restrictions on Jewish emigration from those countries. In collaboration with the Jewish Syrian community and the Jewish Yemenite

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Rebbe nachas!”***

community in the US, he was able to bring about a change in the position of the governments of Syria and Yemen. After two years of massive effort, groups of Jews began emerging from Arab countries.

In 5748, a year after the outbreak of the Intifada, Israel had a unity-national government which combined Likud and Labor. With Shamir as Prime Minister and Peres as Foreign Minister, Israel had no organized public relations approach to counter the attacks in the media. All of Israel’s spokespeople were stricken dumb because any position they took opposed the position of either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Minister. Peres’ position was one of compromise and concessions and Shamir’s position was – as the Rebbe called it –

uncompromising like a shamir-worm (extant in Biblical times with the power to cut through stone).

A committee formed by Likud and headed by Shamir, decided to set up a public relations arm in the US which would circumvent the Foreign Ministry and would work together with rightwing Jewish movements. Yehoram Ben-Shalom was asked to establish Likud USA and that is how he became the official representative of Likud in the US.

It was at this time that Ben-Shalom became acquainted with the Rebbe’s shluchim around the US and when he established a personal relationship with Chabad Chassidim in New York. One of these Chassidim was Rabbi Chone Perman, who went to Ben-Shalom’s house once a week to give a shiur in Gemara and Chassidus. During the shiur he would give the participants a summary of the Rebbe’s latest sichos and that is how Ben-Shalom became aware of the Rebbe’s teachings and his strong position against returning land in Israel.

“At a certain point, Kuti Rapp began giving the weekly shiur. At that point I was already the official representative of Likud and I put together a group of diplomatic attachés who joined the shiur on a regular basis. I had a deep personal connection with Kuti Rapp. Whenever I had a religious issue to discuss, I picked up the phone and called him and he was always happy to help me.

“When I received this position, I felt I needed the Rebbe’s bracha. After all, although I grew up in a home of askanus, I wasn’t used to the diplomatic world and rubbing shoulders with heads of state. I felt I had been given a task of great importance for the sake of the Jewish people, to promote Israel’s interests in the US, and I went for

‘dollars’ in order to get a bracha from the Rebbe.

“The Rebbe’s brachos gave me renewed strength. Always, in difficult times, I think of the Rebbe’s smile and this gives me the strength to go on, to deal with whatever comes my way, and to be successful.”

Were there difficult times when you felt a special need for the Rebbe’s brachos?

“There were many situations like that. As soon as I took the job, I decided to bring Benny Begin to the US, both for public relations work as well as joining me so that I could make connections with heads of Jewish movements and communities in the US. In the course of his trip we arranged a lecture at Columbia University. Two weeks before Begin arrived, the Israeli ambassador spoke at Columbia and certain elements ran him off the stage in humiliation.

“I saw the Rebbe at that time and this visit gave me renewed energy with lots of Jewish pride. I decided that Begin would speak at this university, which is known as being anti-Israel, come what may! My friends at the consulate called and asked me to get out of it. ‘You’re new,’ they said, ‘why start in the Leftist stronghold?’

“In light of what the Rebbe said though, I knew we had to convey a tough message and we could not display weakness. All the advisors who spoke to me at that time were against the plan, but in the end Begin went there and 300 students sat and listened to his speech in fascination.

“My big surprise was when I discovered that the person leading the attack against the Israeli position was the director of the Hillel organization, whose opinions were close to that of Palestinian organizations. That scared me.

“I took the Rebbe’s hard line position on shleimus ha’Aretz and came to the conclusion that no Jew is born a Leftist. Even the biggest Leftist is on the Right by nature, but the media brainwashing often perverts straight thinking.

“The moment I identified the Rebbe’s policy line and it was clear to me that this was precisely the line I wanted to bring to the public relations efforts in the US, I decided that all the Knesset members and ministers who would come to the US who belonged to the Likud party had to see the Rebbe. They had to hear the Rebbe’s position before they set out on their travels to promote the Israeli position.”

ARRANGING MEETINGS WITH THE REBBE

“When it came to arranging meeting with the Rebbe, our contact person was Kuti Rapp. He

would speak to the secretaries and would arrange it so that the ministers and Knesset members did not have to wait on a long line but could enter via a side door that was designated for VIP’s.

“Visiting the Rebbe was not on the official itinerary. It was only once the ministers had arrived in the US that I would personally suggest that they visit the Rebbe with me. I didn’t put the visit on the official agenda so that they wouldn’t compare the Rebbe to other rabbis, and ask to visit rabbis of other groups. After I spoke to them and explained why it was important for them to visit the Rebbe, they all happily agreed to do so.

“One of the first ministers I brought was Roni Milo, then the minister of Police. We went to the Rebbe at the end of 5750, the week of ‘Judges and Enforcers.’ This was shortly after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and threatened

Israel. Roni told the Rebbe that his blessing was important ‘in these difficult times.’ The Rebbe said, ‘These are not difficult times but the days preceding Rosh Chodesh Elul when the King is in the field and is close to every Jew, especially those living in Eretz Yisroel.’

“This message of the Rebbe, which was one of the first regarding the Gulf War, greatly encouraged Roni Milo. Although he was not religious, he received encouragement from the Rebbe’s tremendous bitachon.

“A short while later, on 19 Elul, I brought the Foreign Minister, Dovid Levy, and a whole entourage. It was after the dismantling of the unity government and the establishment of Shamir’s narrow government. The Rebbe received him warmly and spoke to him for several minutes. At the end of their conversation, the Rebbe said to me, ‘You will certainly influence the Likud not to try to expand the government...and in ways of pleasantness and peace.’ The Rebbe also blessed me with a ‘k’siva va’chasima tova, and much success.’

“Dovid Levy was greatly moved by the visit. After the distribution of dollars, we and the entourage went to a special farbrengen at the home of someone in Crown Heights. Dovid Levy spoke excitedly about his acquaintance with Chabad, going back to his Chabad school in Morocco.”

SILVAN SHALOM AND RON NACHMAN

Yehoram had a special story with Mr. Silvan Shalom. He came to the US in Teives 5752 along with his wife Judy. At that time, he served as director of the Electric Company and also sought a place on the Likud list for the Knesset. “I suggested that they come to the Rebbe and they happily acquiesced.



Mr. Yehoram Ben-Shalom near the Rebbe’s room on Motzaei Shabbos Slichos

Judy had been to the Rebbe the year before and was happy to go back and be blessed.

"The Rebbe gave him several dollars, more than the usual, and blessed him, 'You are appointed to bring light to all,' referring to his job at the electric company. Then the Rebbe spoke to his wife, whose parents (Mozes) owned *Yediot Acharonot*, and said to her that they should reserve a spot on the front page of the newspaper to report on the coming of Moshiach. His wife was quite moved and she told the Rebbe that since the Rebbe's previous bracha to her, the newspaper was even more successful.

"R' Rapp told the Rebbe that Silvan was running in the Likud's internal elections and asked for a bracha that he gain a realistic position in the upcoming national elections for the Knesset. The Rebbe's answer was, 'good news, much success.'

"When we left, some Chassidim came over and hugged and blessed Silvan. We didn't know why. They told us that the week before, Mr. Zev Baum had been to the Rebbe. He now serves as Minister of Absorption, and at the time he also planned on running in the internal Likud elections. The Rebbe told him, 'there is no need to rush,' and he gave you a blessing. That means your being elected is assured, they said.

"Silvan didn't quite believe in his chances of being elected to the Likud list for the Knesset, and even after receiving the Rebbe's bracha, he remained unsure, especially after he heard about Ron Nachman's visit to the Rebbe. Nachman was the mayor of Ariel and the Rebbe had also blessed him with, 'good news, much success' for his running in the elections. It didn't make sense to him since Ron Nachman's chances of being elected to a realistic spot were lower than Baum's. Why did the Rebbe push Baum off while blessing Ron Nachman with the same blessing as Silvan?

"When Silvan discussed this with R' Rapp, Kuti said, 'You don't ask questions about the Rebbe!'

"As always, the Rebbe was right. Ron Nachman and Silvan Shalom were elected and also entered the Knesset, while Zev Baum did not. Nachman at first received an unrealistic placing on the list, but he got a reserved spot somewhere in the twenties on the list. I helped place Silvan Shalom 32 on the list and over the years he rose within the party and held senior positions within the government. Baum, who was told not to rush, entered the following Knesset, four years later.

"When we visited the Rebbe with Silvan Shalom, I asked the Rebbe that he make a big outcry that in all the talks taking place with Syria at that time, they should demand the release of all the Jews living in Syria who were being held captive there. The terms should be that Israel would not release captives until all

Syrian Jews were freed.

"The Rebbe did not respond directly to this, but said that in order to save the Jews of Syria, there were things that could be done that were not in the natural order of things, but they could obtain the release of the Jews from there. The Rebbe explained, referring to my position as representative of the Likud movement: '*Lelakeid* (to unify) all Jews, men, women, and children, in Eretz Yisroel, around the study and fulfillment of mitzvos. This *likud* will unify them to greet Moshiach and to receive all the good tidings.'

"The Rebbe added, 'May this also speed up all these matters.' The Rebbe gave me another dollar and blessed me, 'Blessing and success, good news.' We left with Silvan Shalom and his entourage to farbreng in the home of a Lubavitcher in Crown Heights, along with R' Rapp."



Mr. Yehoram Ben-Shalom receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

STRONG MESSAGES

"Of all the public figures I brought to the Rebbe for dollars, then Transportation Minister Moshe Katzav's visit, on Yud Shevat 5752, is most well known. In a long conversation with him, the Rebbe made his position against any concessions abundantly clear, as well as his opposition to mere discussions about concessions to Arabs.

"I went for dollars many times and never heard the Rebbe speak with such pain and such forcefulness to a public figure who came for a blessing. The Rebbe's pain over Shamir, who until then had represented *shleimus ha'Aretz* but had begun to capitulate under American pressure and was ready to discuss giving away land, was apparent.

"The Rebbe said, 'I consistently fought for Shamir's government, and just as I did all I could to establish a

government led by Shamir, if they continue in this direction with talks like these, then I (and the Rebbe referred to himself by name) will be the first to fight with all the power and all my strength against Shamir so that his government collapses. Until now, only Mr. Shimon Peres was against Shamir's government, but if Shamir continues in this direction with autonomy talks, then I will also be opposed to Shamir's government.'

"Today, when we see the devastating results of these talks that began with the Madrid Conference, we can understand how far-reaching the Rebbe's vision was. I have no doubt that the Rebbe, with his ruach ha'kodesh, saw the present situation and tried, with all his might, to avert the slide down the slippery slope.

"What the Rebbe said to Katzav was so sharp that until they showed Katzav a transcript of the conversation and he saw it in black on white, he refused to believe that the Rebbe spoke so harshly."



Mr. Silvan Shalom receiving a dollar from the Rebbe

WORLD PEACE AND THE SEVEN NOACHIDE LAWS

In recent years, Ben-Shalom is busy promoting values of peace around the world. He works as Special Adviser to WAFUNIF's President, and Coordinator of WAFUNIF's Culture of Peace activities, and spends many weeks a year in African countries in the attempt to educate the new generation to peace.

When I told Ben-Shalom about the Rebbe's many activities in promoting universal educational values to the world, he enjoyed finding parallels between his work and the messages the Rebbe wants us to convey.

In the course of his work, Ben-Shalom encountered R' Boaz Kali who disseminates the Seven Noachide Laws among Israeli-Arabs. "I met with him and saw the brochures he produces on the Seven Noachide

Laws. I saw how the main goal of these seven mitzvos is, as the Rambam says, to enable *yishuv ha'olam* (civilized life).

"I learned what the Rambam says about Yemos HaMoshiach when 'the occupation of the entire world will be only to know Hashem.' In the meantime, we need to prepare the world for Geula and as a first step, people have to know how to treat one another with respect, to live in peace with those who are different than themselves. This is what I try to do in my work for the UN."

DEDICATED BACHURIM

"In recent years I've renewed my connection to Chabad thanks to the terrific bachurim from Crown Heights. A few years ago, I helped found a shul near my home in Manhattan. My father died a few months later and, by Divine Providence, I had a place close to my home where I could daven three times a day.

"Every Shabbos we had the third meal in shul and I would say a d'var Torah based on the parsha. One Shabbos, bachurim showed up who introduced themselves as students of the Chabad yeshiva – 770. They asked whether they could relay an idea from the Rebbe.

"I was happy to let them do so. I recalled those wonderful times I had spent in the Rebbe's presence and was happy to, once again, hear the Rebbe's uplifting and deep ideas. From then on, they came every Shabbos.

"I travel a lot but when I am in New York for Shabbos, I am always amazed by the dedication of the bachurim who come from Brooklyn to Manhattan, no matter the weather, in rain and snow and the heat. There were Shabbosos when the weather was so bad I was sure they wouldn't show up, but they always came.

"A few weeks ago I suggested that they spend Shabbos with me so they wouldn't have to walk. They told me they were on K'vutza and they do not leave 770 even for weddings of brothers and sisters! Perhaps it was in exchange for my invitation to them that they invited me to spend Shabbos Slichos in 770.

"I told them that back then, Kuti Rapp had invited me to spend Shabbos in Crown Heights several times but what he did not manage to achieve, despite our great relationship, they would achieve, thanks to their mesirus nefesh every Shabbos.

"Now, between the wonderful Shabbos I spent here and Slichos that are about to begin, I thank Hashem for the privilege I have to return and be so close to the Rebbe, and I hope that we will soon see him with the Geula shleima."

SHLICHUS DIARY:

SRI LANKA

By Zev Crombie

*A member of Anash living in an established community in Eretz Yisroel travels to the “ends of the world” to be with his son and daughter-in-law, a young couple on shlichus. He gets to experience some of the less pleasant aspects of shlichus for the first time. His experiences make for fascinating reading. * A diary of Tishrei 5766.*

Two years ago, my son Mendi and my daughter-in-law Talia went off on shlichus to Sri Lanka (an island nation in South Asia), in order to add this island country to the map of lights that the Rebbe is planting across the world in anticipation of the Geula.

When Mendi and Talia, along with a contingent of three bachurim, first landed in Sri Lanka, they set up camp in the village of Hikkaduwa, which is in the center of the surfer beaches area, where many Israeli surfers congregate. In Hikkaduwa, they did outreach activities for a few months with the Israeli surfers, and enjoyed great success. At the beginning of that winter, when the surfing season came to a close, they decided to move to the capitol city of Colombo, where there is a small

Jewish community of local businessmen and Israelis, as well as many tourists and trekkers passing through.

TISHREI 5766

WEDNESDAY, 5 TISHREI: We are in Ben-Gurion Airport in Eretz Yisroel. Mendi asked us to bring the four species. A Calabrian Esrog was no problem, but where do you get the other three items, ten days before the holiday? Mendi also asked us to bring machzorim with English translation, packages of pre-rolled dough, yahrtzait candles, tuna, little Levik's coat, mezuzos, Bamba snacks for Levik (very important!), and a whole list of other vital things.

The flight to Sri Lanka was on Royal Jordanian Airlines by way of

Amman, Jordan. I saw two things on the flight that I found appealing, and would strongly suggest that El Al adopt similar policies (with some small changes). Firstly, every flight begins with the captain saying a prayer (T'fillas HaDerech?) for a safe trip, without any inhibitions regarding the mention of G-d's name (in Israel, this would be a case for the Supreme Court). Secondly, a number of times during the flight a message appears on the large screen indicating the direction to face (for Moslems) for prayer.

THURSDAY, 6 TISHREI: We landed in Colombo at first light. Mendi came to meet us at the airport, and he used the opportunity to invite the surfers that were on our flight to attend Yom Kippur services.

As soon as you step out of the airport, you see the great poverty of the country. Everything is old and rundown. The atmosphere is hot and humid. It feels like you're in a sauna. The drivers careen about recklessly, and there seem to be no rules and no laws. The white line in the center of the road seems to be only a “suggestion.” The only way to make the trip safely is to follow Mendi's advice, “Close your eyes and pray.” Before the trip, I had suggested that we rent a car, but Mendi had negated that idea. “In Sri Lanka, only Sri Lankans can drive,” he had replied. Now, I knew exactly what he meant.

In honor of our visit, Mendi and



little Levik had gone to one of the nearby villages to milk a cow, and so we had hot coffee waiting for us when we arrived. In general, we read a lot about the lives of shluchim in faraway undeveloped countries, but it is only when you actually visit such a Chabad House in person that you really understand all the little details of what daily life is like for these shluchim. For example, on Shabbos and Yom Tov, they stay in the house all day. There is no shul to go to, there is no Seifer Torah (yet), and (most of the time) there is no minyan.

For a mikva, Mendi set up a very large plastic container filled with water on the porch, where he dunks himself each morning. Fruits and

vegetables are in abundance, and Talia uses them to prepare wonderful dishes, but the nearest place to buy kosher meat is in Thailand. Not long ago, one of his donors paid for Mendi to take a flight to Bangkok and bring back enough meat to last for a while. It's a lot more expensive and complicated than walking to the corner grocery in Kiryat Chabad, in my hometown of Tzfas.

Here's another complicated issue. Back home, a mommy who wants some peace and quiet tells her kids, who are climbing up the walls, to go outside and play. What does a mommy in Sri Lanka do? She has to go out and flag down a "tok-tok" (rickshaw taxi). Tali and Levik travel

for a half hour in the tok-tok until they get to the local mall, where there is a playground. All the other children there are very dark-skinned Sri Lankan kids, and Levik stands out as the only white-skinned child. Everybody stares; there are no playmates; no friends; nobody to fool around with. It's not such a simple way of life!

FRIDAY, 7 TISHREI: Mendi showed me a letter that he received from an English tourist who is married to a Buddhist woman from Sri Lanka. Mendi ran into him when he went to look for Jews at the hotel on Erev Rosh HaShana. This fellow had joined the Rosh HaShana meals, and was very moved by the whole experience. He wrote to Mendi, "I will never forget the meal we had together for the rest of my life."

In the morning, we went to the apartment of Mali to put up a mezuzah. Mali is an Israeli girl who works in Sri Lanka. On the way to Mali we stopped to buy a "soft drink." All along the sides of the roads there are fruit stands selling all sorts of exotic fruits. We stopped at one of the stands and Mendi bought a fresh coconut. The vendor cut a hole in the top of the coconut, put in a straw, and we drank the coconut milk. Later, we went to the home of Gilad and Vered to put up mezuzos by them as well.

Before Shabbos, Mendi and I took a tok-tok to the beach to immerse. Since Colombo is on the ocean, there is no problem finding a suitable beach, especially since the women here are modestly attired and would never go to the beach during daylight hours. The problem is that there is a very strong current, which made it very frightening. We'll have to think about where we will immerse ourselves on Erev Yom Kippur.

SHABBOS, 8 TISHREI: Shabbos here is so very different than Shabbos in Tzfas. There is no

shul (temporarily, we are certain that Mendi will succeed in building one soon), no minyan and no Seifer Torah. All the prayers are held privately at home, so we have all the time in the world to think about Hashem.

Two Israeli couples came at night to the meal. "Where did you buy these delicious challos?" they asked Talia about the challos she baked. No guests came for the lunch meal, so we spent a long Shabbos as the Sri Lankans went about their lives outside. Towards sunset, Mendi and I had a "seider niggunim."

I was somewhat upset about the t'fillos on Shabbos, but Mendi consoled me and told me a story about the holy brothers, R' Elimelech and R' Zushe, who spent a period of time in jail. In the center of the cell was a bucket for the prisoners to relieve themselves and this prevented them from being able to put on t'fillin.

"The same Master of the universe who said we should put on t'fillin is the One who said not to put them on in a place like this," one brother said to console the other.

So I thought, who knows which t'filla is more accepted by G-d, the one I pray in the large shul in Kiryat Chabad in Tzfas, with a large congregation, or the one I pray alone in a forsaken corner of Colombo?

SUNDAY, 9 TISHREI: The eve of Yom Kippur. There is no white chicken with which to do Kaparos. "This money will go to tz'daka, to the Chabad house of Sri Lanka," and I remembered how in Tzfas they slaughter an entire semi-trailer load full of white chickens. I remind myself of the story of the holy brothers. The same Master of the universe that wants us to use a white chicken for Kaparos in Tzfas, wants us to be in Sri Lanka in order to be mekarev His children.

In the afternoon we take a tok-tok to the sea and immerse. The



On a rickshaw, on the way to Mivtza Lulav

locals look at us in wonder. Then I give *malkos* (symbolic lashes) to my son, but who can do the same for me?

In the afternoon we packed all the good food that Talia had prepared for the Seuda HaMafsek, along with all the utensils and the cake for the end of the fast, and we went to the Hilton Hotel of Colombo. The hotel management deviated from its normal policy in allowing Mendi to rent the conference hall in the hotel where the t'fillos would take place as well as the meal before the fast.

About 25 people came for the meal and that was already a great achievement. The waiters served and I imagined what it would be like when Moshiach comes.

I explained to the people in English about the significance of the Kol Nidrei prayer and the other prayers of the day. When Yom Kippur began, Mendi was the chazan and I guided the people, "We are now on p. 42." I am so unused to this style of davening.

YOM KIPPUR: We did not have a minyan for Shacharis or Mincha. Instead of reading the story of Yona, I told the story in English. At N'ila, we had ten Jews and could have

chazaras ha'shatz. We were a motley crew with nothing in common. We sat there together in the conference room of the Hilton Colombo.

Outside, life continued as usual while here, all of us were united in the desire to approach our Father in heaven.

One person emotionally told me that he was living in Sri Lanka for 17 years, was married to a local non-Jew, and he fasted on Yom Kippur every year. He knew no more than that. This was the first year that he was participating in the t'fillos. I thought the trip to Sri Lanka was worthwhile just for this man!

Another man, a tourist from New Zealand, reminisced about going to shul, as a child, with his father. Mendi met him on his round of the hotels and invited him to the t'fillos. It's hard to believe that he would have fasted otherwise.

The davening was over and we all called out "Shma Yisroel." It was an emotional moment. Mendi blew the shofar and the fast was over. I'll never forget that Yom Kippur!

BETWEEN YOM KIPPUR AND SUKKOS: We used the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos to tour the country a bit. We hired a

driver who took us to the tall mountains in the center of the island. After the terrible heat of Colombo, we felt relieved to experience weather conditions more similar to that of Tzfas. The road wound through the mountains. Along the way we saw fruit stands with many fruits that we had never seen before. I especially enjoyed a large, fresh pineapple, which the vendor expertly peeled.

We went to an elephant “orphanage.” It’s amazing to see how one man can control dozens of these enormous animals. This illustrated for us what we learned in Chassidus about the greatness of man over animals. We took an elephant ride and held the first Tzivos Hashem rally in the world on an elephant as we said the Twelve P’sukim with Levik.

We went to our hotel at night and explained to the manager that we were religious Jews and could not eat in the restaurant. We asked for permission to cook on the portable gas burner we had brought with us. To our surprise, he refused. We continued to explain that we

would use it just to prepare supper for ourselves. He was very polite but he maintained his refusal, which really surprised us since Sri Lankans are nice, easy-going people.

Having no choice, Mendi took the portable gas burner along with a pot and some potatoes to the end of the garden that surrounded the hotel and sat in the dark to cook the food. Nobody was around. All the guests were ensconced in their rooms. Then, in the darkness, a young couple approached. They couldn’t find their way in the vegetation that surrounded the hotel.

One glance from Mendi was enough to ascertain that these were Israelis. Not only that but they were mekuravim of Rabbi Yehuda Dunin in Chaifa! We invited them to join us and we spent an enjoyable evening together. In the morning, Mendi went to put t’fillin on with Dror.

SUKKOS: Erev Sukkos Mendi and Danny (one of the mekuravim) built a sukka on the roof. There was no problem with s’chach since there is an abundance of coconut leaves there. For those who don’t know, coconuts grow on a palm very

similar to the date palm, but it’s taller.

We had a few guests for the night meals. One of them, Oran, had traveled a lot in the Far East and had already visited several Chabad houses. He told us a story that he had heard at the Chabad house in Delhi. When the bachurim-shluchim arrived there, they wanted to put stickers on all the rickshaws, but the local drivers did not allow it. The drivers consider the rickshaw too precious for stickers to be stuck on them. Only one driver allowed them to do so and then he told them an incredible story.

He had not had children for many years. When his wife finally became pregnant, it was complicated and the doctors said she had to terminate the pregnancy. He was devastated by this. When the Chabad shliach saw him walking despondently down the street, he stopped him and asked what was wrong.

He told his story and the shliach suggested that he come with him to the Chabad house and write to the Rebbe. He did so and when he opened the *Igros Kodesh* the letter with the Rebbe’s answer was clear: not to listen to the doctors but to sustain the pregnancy.

So in opposition to the doctors’ advice, this simple Indian followed the Rebbe’s answer. Where did his faith in a man he had never heard of or seen, come from? It’s hard to know. His wife eventually gave birth to a daughter. “And now,” he said to the shluchim, “you can stick as many stickers of the Rebbe as you want on my rickshaw.”

I saw many other interesting things on my visit, but the most impressive thing of all was to see one of many young couples on shlichus from up close. We salute them! When Moshiach comes, Hashem will bring the Jews of Sri Lanka to the Holy Land. May it be now!



The Hilton hotel, where we davened on Yom Kippur

LIFE WITH THE MIRACLES OF THE REBBE

By Nosson Avrohom

At a young age and even behind the Iron Curtain, Rabbi Yehoshua Raskin experienced the Rebbe's miracles, starting when he was instructed to enter the lion's den of the terrifying KGB building and continuing throughout his years of work for CHAMA in the former Soviet Union. * Personal stories and recollections in an interview with Beis Moshiach.

It was Rosh Chodesh Kislev night 5767 when students of Chabad – Ohr Avner in Kfar Sitrin sat and farbrenged with Rabbi Yehoshua Raskin of Nachalat Har Chabad. First, he sat with the Russian students who study in the Naaleh program and then with the students of the yeshiva g'dola and smicha program.

He explained to the students, in their language, the significance of Rosh Chodesh Kislev “the Rebbe is healthy.” Then he went on to relate his fascinating life

story starting in Russia and continuing in Eretz Yisroel. I asked if I could interview him for this magazine and he happily agreed.

R' Raskin's life story is intertwined with a wide range of stories that he merited to see and experience in his life, many of them connected to the Rebbe's Heavenly activities to help Russian Jewry, including Chabad Chassidim who remained in Soviet Russia. “I don't know if anyone could do a miracle like this except

for the Rebbe,” began R' Raskin.

“We lived in Gorky (today Nizhni-Novogrod). After a large group of Chabad Chassidim left Russia in the famous escape of 1946-7, my father also tried to leave but was caught. He managed to send his sisters across the border but as for himself, he was too late. We remained in Russia.”

Gorky was a closed city in Russia and you needed a special permit to live there because many Russian security industries were located there. Tourists or guests were not allowed entry. If a son, who lived in another city, wanted to meet his parents, for example, they had to meet in Moscow.

“In my youth, my brother and I went to learn in an underground yeshiva in Samarkand. It wasn't easy being accepted to the yeshiva because they constantly tested us in various ways to make sure we could keep a secret.”

At a certain point, the government began to allow some people to make aliya for the purpose of uniting families. Most of the families which left Russia were from Kishinev and Chernovitz. All those who received permission to emigrate were elderly. At this time there was



great tension between Russia and Israel because of the aid that Russia provided the Arabs. This was the reason that young people were not allowed to emigrate. The Russians said they weren't interested in supplying soldiers for the Zionist army.

One of the people allowed to leave Russia was my father's brother-in-law, Rabbi Moshe

Veshedsky a"h. It was 9 Kislev 5726. He went to the Rebbe and in yechidus he asked for a bracha for us to leave Russia. At the beginning of the yechidus he said, "My brother-in-law needs a big *yeshua*," referring to my father, R' Sholom Dovber Raskin.

The Rebbe pointed out that he too had needed a miracle since according to the communist

government he was supposed to remain there, and for Hashem it makes no difference whether it's a big miracle or a small miracle. My father had asked R' Moshe to ask the Rebbe whether we should leave Gorky, but the Rebbe said there was no reason to move since the communists ruled everywhere.

Then the Rebbe surprisingly said that we should submit papers

to leave the country to the emigration office in Gorky. R' Moshe was taken aback since Gorky was a tough place under extra surveillance, making it much harder to deal with them.

When we found out what the Rebbe had said, we were flabbergasted. To present the papers in Gorky?! To a normal person this idea was out of the question. (To make this clearer I'll tell you that in 5750, after perestroika, I went to Russia on behalf of the CHAMA organization together with a group of bachurim in order to do activities in various cities. I was able to go everywhere but Gorky, which was still closed to strangers!)

If the Rebbe said it though, we wouldn't argue, despite our great fear. My parents asked my brother and me to return to Gorky. We realized it had to do with requesting permission to leave Russia.

We lived in a common courtyard with gentile neighbors. When the letter with the special stamp arrived in the mailbox, one of the gentiles opened the box. When he saw it was addressed to us, he was sure it contained a harsh decree from the government and he threw it in the snow. Only afterwards, when he realized that this was dangerous, did he slip the envelope under our door.

Remember, tensions with Israel ran high. If the authorities found out that a Jewish woman received a letter from her son in Israel, she was fired from her job.

Rabbi Sholom Ber Laine, my mother's brother, sent us an invitation to emigrate to Israel under the program of uniting families. After receiving this letter, a new problem arose. There was no emigration office in Gorky. It was simply out of the question to them that any resident living there

would ever leave. We didn't know how to submit our request. My parents finally decided that if the Rebbe said we should submit our papers in Gorky, we would have to go to the KGB office.

The KGB building was a building with four stories above ground. Nobody knew how many additional stories were underground. People walked four blocks out of their way to circumvent it. Yet we were going to enter the lion's den with the Rebbe's bracha.

My mother and I arrived there and apprehensively entered. We asked at the entrance where we could submit our emigration request. The clerks were furious and every minute another clerk and another soldier joined the fracas and shouted "traitors" at us. It was terrifying.

Then in the midst of the commotion, a door of one of the rooms opened and a woman with the rank of captain came out and asked what the hullabaloo was about. When she heard our request, she took us to her room.



She listened to us but as I said,

a request like this in Gorky was unheard of. She called Moscow and a clerk at the emigration office guided her in how to open an emigration file for us. We were stunned. We thought we wouldn't leave the building alive, yet the Rebbe had opened an emigration office for us within the KGB building in Gorky!

She asked us to fill out forms, which we did, and then all we needed to do was come back again in order to hear whether our request had been approved or we were on our way to jail and years of slave labor in exile.

A week went by and we were told to go back to the KGB building. The tension at home was enormous. To receive a response so soon did not bode well. I remember going with my mother on the bridge that led to the building, with a prayer in my heart that the bridge would never end. We were taken to a waiting room in a building built in the shape of a *Ches*. Around us sat officers and senior clerks who looked grim. We stood in the center.

After a few seconds of tense

СВЕДЕНИЯ О ПРЕДЪЯВИТЕЛЕ SIGNALEMENT DU PORTEUR		МЕСТО ДЛЯ ФОТОГРАФИЧЕСКОЙ КАРТОЧКИ	
1. Дата рождения <u>20. септ. 1947.</u> Date de naissance <u>20. September 1947.</u>	 М. П. _____ Подпись владельца — Signature du porteur		
2. Место рождения <u>г. Горький</u> Lieu de naissance <u>g. Gorki</u>			
3. Семейное положение <u>холост</u> Etat civil <u>non marié</u>			
4. Специальность и род занятий _____ Spécialité ou profession _____			
5. Последнее местожительство в СССР _____ Dernier domicile dans l'URSS _____	Подлинность фотографической карточки и собственноручной подписи удостоверяется. L'authenticité de la photographie et de la signature est certifiée.		
6. Документ, на основании которых выдан настоящий вид на жительство _____ Document, sur lequel est basé le présent permis de séjour _____			
7. ПРИМЕТЫ	SIGNALEMENT		
Рост _____ Taille _____	Глаза _____ Yeux _____		
Нос _____ Nas _____	Волосы _____ Cheveux _____		
Особые приметы _____ Signes particuliers _____	 Секретарь <u>А. Соколов</u> Secrétaire		

Yehoshua Raskin's picture when he left the Soviet Union



Rabbi Yehoshua Raskin giving
a pidyon nefesh to the Rebbe

silence, one of the officers got up and said to my mother, “Do you want to change your mind? You have the right, and we will ensure that you will only suffer minimally from your traitorous actions. If you don’t change your mind, we will act accordingly.”

My mother was brave and said, “I appreciate what the communist government has done for me, such as my sons studying in university, and who knows whether, when we get to Israel, they can continue studying. But the Germans murdered my entire family and I have only one brother in Israel and he is sick and very weak. This is why I want to go and help him. If he was strong enough, I would ask him to come here and be with me.”

A few moments of silence prevailed, moments in which we trembled. The officer suddenly changed his tone and took out a signed letter which permitted us to leave. He gave it to my mother. We were openmouthed in shock.

We realized that if my mother had been frightened by his threats and asked to rescind her request, we would not have received the permission that had already been granted! The Rebbe simply took us out of Russia in the most legal, official way, though it was miraculous! The Rebbe changed the order of nature. We were ecstatic.

In the following days, until we left Russia, we experienced a few glitches. The first was that our exit permit was in effect for four days and it was Thursday. We went to Moscow immediately and arrived on Friday where we got a visa for Israel. The Russian exit permit expired on Sunday. We asked two rabbanim whether we could leave on Shabbos. One paskened that we should desecrate one Shabbos in order to be able to observe many other Shabbosos but the other rabbi, a Chabad Chassid, said the permit expired Sunday evening and if the Russians wanted to foil us, they could do

that if we left on Shabbos too.

We left Sunday morning by train to Austria via Poland. I was thrilled but my father’s face was inscrutable the entire time. Whenever the Polish border guards entered the compartment, he knew that the danger was not yet past. It was only when Austrian policemen came in that he knew that the Russian nightmare had ended. My father went over to the Austrian border guard and hugged and kissed him and then he hugged us.

* * *

When the Raskin family arrived in Eretz Yisroel they settled in “Tochelet” (which later became part of Kfar Chabad).

In Tishrei of that year, the Rebbe paid for tickets for all the Chassidim who had left Russia, so they could come to 770. The Vaad in Kfar Chabad, that had the responsibility of distributing tickets, decided to give them only to those over age 20.

“I was just 20, but my brother

made great efforts in order to raise the money so that he could fly too. In those days, the financial situation wasn't great."

It's difficult to describe in words how one feels when first encountering the Rebbe: We were given an appointment for yechidus on 6 Tishrei. I didn't know how to write a letter to the Rebbe. I wrote the pidyon nefesh in Russian and mentioned that my 20th birthday was the next day.

The Rebbe's first question was whether I had received an aliya before Shabbos and I said I had not. The Rebbe said, "If you didn't get before, get after." He thought a little and said, "It will surely be hard for you to find an aliya, so get an aliya on Monday or Thursday." The Rebbe also told me, "Until age 20 there is no punishment [meted out from On High], and now a new page has been opened for you."

Since then, I've been to the

Rebbe every Tishrei, except for one year when I was in Germany for Jewish seminars that I arranged for emigrants from Russia. When I went to 770 afterwards, Rabbi Groner the secretary asked me where I had been... I don't know if he asked me on his own or because he was told to ask...

That year, Tishrei was packed with experiences. At the end of the month, my brother and I returned to Eretz Yisroel with the desire to return and be with the Rebbe. Since we were of draft age, we were not allowed to leave the country except for once in three years.

During the following year, we tried to use connections so that we could go back to the Rebbe for Tishrei, but all our attempts were to no avail. One day, we found out that the Chassid, R' Moshe Segal was friendly with Menachem Begin, who was in the Opposition at the time. He arranged a

meeting for us with him in Metzudat Ze'ev.

When we told him what we wanted, not only did Begin not understand us, he even berated us. I'll never forget what he said. "When boys your age are risking their lives in the dunes of the Sinai and freezing in the Golan Heights in order to protect our homeland, you need to be here! If you want to learn, do it here, in Eretz Yisroel. You are not permitted to gallivant in the United States of America."

We were taken aback by his approach. Not realizing that Begin knew Russian, I said to my brother in Russian, "Let's leave. He's a demagogue."

Begin jumped as though he had been bitten by a snake. "Me, a demagogue?"

He called for his advisor, Yechiel Kadishai and asked him to tell us about his war against the British. I said to him, "We risked our lives to learn Torah. By

THE REBBE SAVED US

As I said, I worked for CHAMA for many years and was greatly encouraged by the Rebbe. When we built the main building in Nachala, someone told us about the possibility of getting a million and a half dollars from the American Congress. They said it would be done through a yeshiva in Yerushalayim that would receive five million dollars, and out of that, we would get a million and a half. The middleman urged us to accept or reject the plan within a week, and if we weren't interested he would find someone else.

We don't do things without asking the Rebbe for a bracha, so we duly sent a letter to the Rebbe. We were afraid that the answer wouldn't arrive quickly enough because the Rebbe did not always answer institutions. In consultation with an askan we dared to write that if we did not receive an answer within a week, we would take it to mean that the Rebbe supports the plan.

A few days went by and we got a letter in which the Rebbe wrote that he rejected the idea. He added, "How surprising that you declare that if you do not receive an answer within a week that you would interpret this as my consent, when it is possible that the letter did not even arrive." To say the least, the Rebbe did not like being pushed for an answer.

It turned out, two or three years later, that whoever received those funds ended up in jail for fraud. The Rebbe saved us.

"How surprising that you declare that if you do not receive an answer within a week that you would interpret this as my consent, when it is possible that the letter did not even arrive."



Rabbi Raskin receiving kos shel bracha

I was very surprised by the Rebbe's answer knowing that the Rebbe's approach was to have short engagements, and the Rebbe was telling me to marry eight months later!

nature, I would rather be at the Suez Canal now, but even if the Rebbe was in Russia, I would ask the Russian consulate to allow me to see him there."

When Begin heard this, he retorted, "I am also a Chassid of the Rebbe," and he asked his advisor when he would be writing his next letter to the Rebbe since he wanted to complain about us in his next letter!

Apparently, Begin had a lengthy correspondence with the Rebbe. When I heard that he was going to write to the Rebbe about me, I was very nervous. Not long afterwards, Begin received an amazing reply in which the Rebbe responded to all his complaints, "Since two bachurim went to you, who were moser nefesh to fulfill Torah and mitzvos in Russia, you should help them come here..."

When the Rebbe asks, that's another story. Begin used his connections on our behalf. In the meantime, I became engaged and then, one day, R' Shloimke Maidanchek came to me with an exit permit. He winked and said, "Now you're really in trouble, they

gave you permission." He thought that since I was engaged, I would not go, but he was wrong. A few days later I was on my way to 770.

It was before Pesach. The talmidim on K'vutza had just started their year of K'vutza at that time (unlike today). In those days, the Rebbe held the Pesach Seder in the apartment of the Rebbe Rayatz. It was decided that only "*shivas ha'kanim*" (lit., the seven branches of the menorah, referring to select groups of seven bachurim each, who were charged with producing and giving over novel insights to the other bachurim on a weekly basis) in Nigleh and Chassidus as well as those finishing their year on K'vutza, would be allowed to enter. I was asked to be on guard so that only those allowed in entered.

After Pesach I had yechidus and I asked when I should get married and where I should live. Regarding the time of the wedding, the Rebbe said, "Surely there were decisions that were mutually made?" I said it hadn't

been decided yet. "Were there suggestions? Were matters concluded?" I said no. I said the only conclusion was that I would go to the Rebbe and everything would be decided there.

The Rebbe said, "If there were no suggestions or decisions, I would suggest that the wedding be held in Kislev. During all months it is customary to make the wedding in the first half of the month and since Kislev is special, you can marry during the second half, when the moon is diminishing."

I was very surprised by the Rebbe's answer knowing that the Rebbe's approach was to have short engagements, and the Rebbe was telling me to marry eight months later! I was thinking to myself about getting married on 14 Kislev (the Rebbe's anniversary), and the Rebbe, as though reading my mind, said "As far as the date in Kislev, the kalla will decide."

The Rebbe continued to be involved in all the preparations for the wedding. A few months later, I asked the Rebbe where to live,

whether in Nachalat Har Chabad, that had been founded at that time, in Kfar Chabad, where my parents lived, or in Lud, where my in-laws lived. The Rebbe said we should live in Kfar Chabad.

In those days, the vaad hardly allowed anybody to live in the Kfar, because they wanted families to move to Nachalat Har Chabad, which was just getting started. In light of the Rebbe's answer, the vaad made an exception and approved my living in Kfar Chabad.

Two months later, when all had been arranged, Rabbi Efraim Wolf told me he would not accept me into the Kollel in Kfar Chabad. He wanted me to live in Nachalat Har Chabad. I argued with him, but he stuck to his guns. Before I returned to Eretz Yisroel I had another yechidus and I asked the Rebbe about this. The Rebbe said that he had changed his mind and now it would be better if I lived in Nachala. The Rebbe explained that the government was complaining that Chabad had been given a neighborhood in Kiryat Malachi for immigrants and instead of immigrants, they were sending old-timers there, "and you are a new immigrant."

* * *

I told the Rebbe that I really didn't understand how I could live for another six months. The Rebbe said it was not a problem with the heart, and that I should divert my attention from it and it would go away on its own. "Strengthen your faith and bitachon. It's just a matter of nerves."

Rabbi Raskin worked for years for the CHAMA organization in Nachalat Har Chabad, organizing activities and lectures for Russian Jews. He began his work while still a bachur, under the auspices of Tzach.

"My brother Shlomo did a lot of work at that time in the absorption centers throughout the country. One time, a Russian bachur who lived in the US had a yechidus and the Rebbe asked him why he didn't reach out to new immigrants. The bachur said he was shy and it didn't suit his nature. The Rebbe said, 'Go ask Shlomo Raskin. He's an expert in this.'

I worked for years for CHAMA and always received amazing answers from the Rebbe. I felt that the Rebbe was pampering me because on nearly every subject that I wrote, I received a clear answer. Back at the beginning, the Rebbe told me I should use my abilities and talents in this work.

More than once I saw how every answer of the Rebbe's was precise. It was in 1990 when communism fell and I was asked by the organization to run CHAMA's activities in Russia. When I wrote to the Rebbe about this, the answer was, 'If your wife agrees, it should be in a good and successful time.' It really didn't

work out well for family reasons and after two years I stopped my work in the CIS.

While working in Russia, I saw many 'Baalshemske' miracles. Here are two of them:

"A few days before the attempted revolt in Russia at the end of 5751, I was in 770. I planned on going to Eretz Yisroel and from there to continue on to Russia. On Shabbos, I got a bottle of mashke from the Rebbe in honor of CHAMA's having a booth at the international book fair in Moscow. On Thursday I passed by for 'dollars' after a sicha, and the Rebbe told me what to do. Among other things, he said to have a pushka at the booth, and he indicated that it should be a big one. The Rebbe gave me a dollar and additional dollars for everything I asked.

"A few hours before leaving for the airport, I found out that things were in an uproar in Russia. I didn't know what to do. I stood where those traveling abroad received a parting bracha from the Rebbe, and thought about my options. I could ask the Rebbe for permission to cancel my trip, yet I had no doubt that the Rebbe knew there would be a revolt and he had blessed me regardless.

"As I stood there wondering what to do, Leibel Groner (who knew about my dilemma) came over and told me that the Rebbe told him that I shouldn't change my plans. I immediately ran and called Moscow and informed the office that I was coming and they should send a car to the airport to pick me up.

"At the office they didn't know what I was talking about since all flights had been canceled, and tanks were patrolling near the airport. I said that if the Rebbe had blessed me, I wasn't changing my plans.



Rabbi Raskin with his shluchim sons



Rabbi Raskin (center) doing outreach work

and fell. He went for tests but from that point on, he began to experience similar attacks from time to time and became very stressed by the situation.

When he arrived in Eretz Yisroel he rushed to Kaplan hospital, where he knew a top doctor. When this doctor, Dr. Trachtenberg, heard that he was from Nachalat Har Chabad, he began to praise the Lubavitcher Rebbe to the group of doctors standing around.

After examining R' Raskin, the doctor said it was a problem with his heart and he asked him to come for another examination in six months.

R' Raskin: After a few months, when the attacks didn't stop and even got worse, I went to 770. It was a few months after the Rebbe's heart attack in 1978. The Rebbe allowed yechidus for only thirty seconds. When R' Groner saw that I wanted to submit all my medical records, he asked me to bring a letter which he would hand in for me so that when I had the yechidus, I wouldn't hold up the line.

When I went into the Rebbe, he smiled, raised his hand and asked whether I had written something for him. After a minute or two I suddenly realized that R' Groner had not given the Rebbe the medical report. He had planned on giving it after the yechidus. Fortunately, I had a copy with me and I gave it to the Rebbe who read it all quickly. After a few moments, the Rebbe said, "I see that he is not recommending medication, and that he is telling you to come back in six months."

I told the Rebbe that I really didn't understand how I could live for another six months. The Rebbe said it was not a problem with the heart, and that I should divert my attention from it and it would go

"The reality far exceeded anything that I may have imagined. I arrived in Eretz Yisroel and heard that the revolt had ended. It lasted all of three days, which was against what all the experts had predicted. The flight I left on was the first flight that landed in Russia after the revolt. I was enthralled by the Rebbe's obvious prophecy. As far

as everybody else knew, the revolt would last a long time and end in bloodshed, yet the Rebbe knew precisely when it would end."

R' Raskin experienced many miracles in his life, but the following story stands out. The story began when he was in Canada and he suddenly began feeling intense tremors in his chest. He had trouble breathing

away on its own. "Strengthen your faith and bitachon. It's just a matter of nerves." The Rebbe told me to go back to the doctor in six months just to follow through with it. I was ecstatic.

After a few days I went to the airport and felt another attack. This time I wasn't nervous about it since the Rebbe had blessed me. Since then, the situation improved more and more until the attacks ceased. In subsequent exams, the doctor admitted that the attacks had nothing to do with my heart but were just from nerves and he suggested that I take tranquilizers and stop my public work.

He told me how he knew the Rebbe and why he had so highly praised him at our first meeting. A few years earlier he had visited Caracas for a conference. Rabbi Moshe Perman, the shliach there in Venezuela, had also participated and he suggested that the doctor go with him to New York and meet the Rebbe. At first he refused, but when he heard that they would be at a farbrengen – hearing this Yiddish word excited him and he decided to go. He went to New York and to the farbrengen and was swept away by it.

A few months after that appointment with the doctor, when I visited 770, I met R' Perman and told him about my meeting with the doctor and how he admired the Rebbe. I told him

THE REBBE NOTICED

At CHAMA we decided to publish a newspaper called *Alef*. At first, it came out once a month, then twice a month, and it was very successful. Every Thursday I would rush to the post office in Tel Aviv and send four copies, one to the Rebbe, one to the Rebbetzin, one to the secretaries, and one to Rabbi Chadakov.

One week I had a strange thought. Why did I always rush to send the publication to the Rebbe? Who said the Rebbe read it? Shluchim from around the world sent the Rebbe their publications and when did he have time for them all?

That same week I found out that the Rebbe not only read it but he also read my thoughts. I received three comments from the Rebbe about the last issue, two of which I remember. One comment was about a news item in the Judaism-Around-the-World section about the first female Reform rabbi who officiated at a wedding. The Rebbe asked: was our goal to give her publicity, void of any criticism? Then the Rebbe asked us not to publish anything negative about her in subsequent issues because this too was publicity.

The second comment was about a mistake in a date about a certain city. The person who had translated it had made a mistake and written that a certain building in the city had been built at a time before the Flood. The Rebbe noted: Who saved this city from the Flood?

that the doctor had changed his opinion to what the Rebbe said to begin with, and said that I should stop my public work. R' Perman chastised me for not writing all this to the Rebbe.

I immediately wrote a letter and did not expect a response. A few hours later, when I was about to fly, I heard that the secretaries were looking for me since they had a response for me. The Rebbe's answer was not to stop my public work, even for a short time, because this change would worsen my state of mind.

* * *

R' Raskin is involved in baking matzos in Kfar Chabad and the Ukraine and has a great influence on many of the workers, most of whom are not Chabad Chassidim.

R' Raskin takes pride in his three sons on shlichus: Shlomo, shliach in Frankfurt, Germany; Aryeh Zev, shliach in Cyprus; Shmuel, shliach in Budapest, Hungary. "My other sons will also be shluchim when they get married," he says gleefully, and adds that nothing could be better than that.

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POST-TISHREI

MUSINGS

By Rabbi Yaakov Shmuelewitz, Chabad house-Beit Shaan

Having just experienced the ten days of repentance and Yom Kippur, I am reminded of three stories of baalei t'shuva and their mighty challenges and triumphs. Let us be inspired by them and perhaps we too will try to change some little things in our own lives, or at least be more sensitive to the process baalei t'shuva go through.

I heard the following story from a Tamim who spent some time on shlichus at the Chabad house in Thailand. An Israeli young man participated in all the shiurim at the Chabad house, recited the entire book of T'hilim every day, went on Mivtza T'fillin, and helped out the Chabad house by running errands,

with advertising, etc.

The Chabad house received information that a certain Israeli who was touring in Thailand had to be told that his father had suddenly passed away in Israel. A picture of the young man was sent via email to all the Chabad houses in Thailand and the Israeli who was a mekurav of the Chabad house was asked to hang up notices with the man's picture and name.

The mekurav heard that the man they sought had just joined a tour into the mountains. He immediately got on his motorcycle and chased after the group until he located the son and brought him back to the Chabad house, where he was told

the sad news. They quickly arranged for his flight back home.

There was just one very serious problem that thwarted the mekurav's t'shuva process, and that was Shabbos observance. Throughout the week, he was fully involved at the Chabad house. On Fridays too, he went to the Chabad house and helped set up the tables and with all the Erev Shabbos preparations. He even joined the Friday night davening and the beginning of the Shabbos meal, but in the middle of the meal, as though powerful forces were dragging him away, he left the table to join his friends out on the town.

The mekurav was greatly disturbed by his behavior. He tried in various ways to stop himself. Sometimes he arrived on Friday and told the shliach, "Please, take my cell phone and the keys to my motorcycle. Put them in your safe and don't give them to me until Shabbos is over." But it didn't help. When the time came, he simply disappeared with his friends and returned, as always, on Sunday.

On one occasion, at a 3 Tamuz farbrengen, the mekurav was inspired and he announced that the next day he was going to open the ark and before the Torah scrolls he would swear that he would no longer desecrate the Shabbos. The bachurim-shluchim told him not to swear, but he had made up his mind. The next day he gaily said he had sworn and everything would be



fine, but when Shabbos came, he disappeared once again.

We, who are shomer-Shabbos, who are used to being so for years or our entire lives, can never understand the inner struggle that baalei t'shuva experience as they are becoming observant (and even for years afterward). We can only quote the Rambam (Laws of T'shuva, chapter 7, halacha 6), "Great is t'shuva which draws a person close to the Sh'china ... yesterday he was despised by G-d, disgusting, distant, and abhorrent, and today he is beloved, dear, close, and a friend."

With time, that mekurav was able to overcome his test and today, baruch Hashem, he is Shabbos observant, and helps the guests who join the Chabad house.

T'FILLIN ON SHABBOS AT THE KOSEL

Here's an example of a baal t'shuva who needed guidance. A bachur from Beit Shaan began getting involved in a religious life. He became more and more observant until he rented an apartment in the Old City in Yerushalayim. The first Shabbos in the holy city, he woke up early, put on his tallis and t'fillin, and went to daven Shacharis at sunrise at the Kosel.

He wondered why people were looking at him oddly until someone finally motioned to him that on Shabbos you don't wear t'fillin. You can just imagine how embarrassed and awful he felt, and what strength he needed in order not to break.

This is what baalei t'shuva have to contend with – nonstop disappointments and setbacks until they stabilize. Perhaps we can now understand what Chazal say (quoted in Rambam, *ibid*, halacha 4), "The place where baalei t'shuva stand, the perfectly righteous cannot stand there. They [baalei t'shuva] have an advantage over tzaddikim who never

sinned, because they conquer the Evil Inclination more than them."

THE PATH TO T'SHUVA BEGINS IN A SUKKA

A few years ago, a young man from a kibbutz came to the sukka in the center of the business district of Beit Shaan. He was looking for a mezuzah (he said he had a mezuzah and just needed the paper that goes inside). The Chassidim in the sukka explained a bit about Torah and mitzvos. Today, that young man is the shliach in Bolivia, Rabbi Yotem Klein.

Sometimes, the story begins with sleeping in a sukka. Aryeh was 15 when he made aliya to Beit Shaan from Minsk. Perhaps in the merit of his grandparents, Aryeh was drawn to Judaism and he switched from a

the heat, to enable passersby to do the mitzva. Towards the end of Sukkos he didn't feel well, maybe because of the sun or from exhaustion, and he did not show up in shul Simchas Torah night.

I was a little worried about him, but I couldn't tarry. We davened, made Kiddush, and did the hakafos with tremendous simcha. When we were finished I asked two T'mimim, who had come to help out, to come with me to Aryeh's house.

Aryeh's parents motioned to us to be quiet since Aryeh really wasn't feeling well and he did not allow anyone to enter his room. I informed the parents that we were going to make hakafos in their house together with Aryeh, and his father was invited to join us in the dancing.

Once again, Aryeh's parents

Aryeh's parents warned us that Aryeh was sick and there was no way he would come out of his room for hakafos...

public school to a religious school.

We met a few times in shul and as Sukkos approached he wanted to sleep in the sukka on our porch. I didn't tell him that according to Chabad custom we do not sleep in the sukka but happily invited him to use it. He came every night, sometimes with a friend, and went to sleep in the sukka. Our connection deepened because of this. He went to learn in the yeshiva of Rabbi Grossman in Migdal HaEmek and then he went to the Gutnick Center-Chabad in Yerushalayim.

The next chapter in the story also took place on Sukkos and Simchas Torah. The bachur came home to Beit Shaan for Tishrei and got involved in mitzva lulav. He stood for hours at the Sukkas HaAchva in

warned us that Aryeh was sick and there was no way he would come out of his room for hakafos. Being somewhat intoxicated, I went into Aryeh's room and told him he was coming out for hakafos. Aryeh actually got up and came out. Each person was given some volume of Chassidus (to use in place of Torah scrolls) and the dancing began around the table. Our enthusiasm was so great that the parents asked us not to jump too high so we would avoid banging into the chandelier.

Aryeh came home with me as he needed to say Kiddush and have the Yom Tov meal. Two hours later he returned home, hale and hearty, to his delighted though stunned parents. The fire of simcha had completely eradicated whatever ailed him (like in the famous story with

the Alter Rebbe).

Today, Aryeh helps out shluchim and is a successful teacher in the US. He maintains that it was an outright miracle and solely because of the power of being on the Rebbe's shlichus that he was able to get out of bed and dance on that Simchas Torah.

"A SUKKALE A KLEINE"

Who can estimate how many baalei t'shuva, shluchim and rabbanim, owe their t'shuva to the little Sukkat HaAchva that is set up in Beit Shaan, Dimona, or Yerucham. Or to the mobile sukka that goes around and visits army bases and tiny outposts all throughout Israel.

One of my childhood memories from before I became acquainted with Chassidus was when we lived in Yerushalayim and my brother and I heard that every day of Chol HaMoed, cars left Shikun Chabad for army bases in the Jordan Valley. Cars also went out there on Chanuka and Purim to bring holiday

joy to the soldiers.

My brother and I, aged 12 and 13, asked whether we could join them. I have to admit ... don't tell anyone, but between ourselves, we called this "Chabad outings." What could be more fun for kids than to let them enter an army base, dance with soldiers, and see tanks and missiles!

Apparently though, deep inside, the seeds of admiration for Chabad were sown until one day, we joined Chabad and became the Rebbe's shluchim ourselves. Today, we are the ones who organize these "outings" and we enlist bachurim for mitzvaim. Everybody benefits. The soldiers enjoy the Yom Tov and get to shake the Dalet minim, and the bachurim work on the Rebbe's shlichus and enable Jews to do a mitzva.

ADVICE FOR MY FELLOW SHLUCHIM

Beit Shaan is near the Jordan Valley highway which is called Axis Road 90. It's the main road that

connects Teveria and Tzfas in the north with Yerushalayim, the Dead Sea, and all the cities of the south. Not too many years ago, this highway was heavily traveled and many tourists would pass Beit Shaan and would need a sukka on their long trip.

We built a large sukka near the road and hung a big sign: "Sukkat HaAchava – Tzeirei Chabad" (back then we even advertised in *Hamodia*). We helped many families fulfill the mitzva of sukka on their long trips.

I suggest to any Chabad house that is located near a main road or near a tourist spot, to put up a sukka. You can usually find donors who will pay to put up a sukka like this in exchange for advertising their name on a big sign that is seen by thousands. You need a spacious sukka, a table and benches, a picture of the Rebbe and a pushka for those who want to make a donation. It's a mitzva as well as a kiddush Hashem and kiddush sheim Lubavitch. Many visitors left thank you notes and praise for Chabad and the Rebbe.



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THE UNEXPECTED GUEST

By Menachem Ziegelboim

A story of Chabad Chassidic heroism and the revelation of the hidden spark within every Jew, presented in honor of the first yahrtzait of Reb Shmuel (Mulle) Pruss, on the sixth day of Tishrei.

PART I

A tense silence filled the courthouse. All waited to hear the sentence. In the prisoners' dock sat two young Lubavitchers of average height and intelligent eyes. They knew the sentence ahead of time, more or less. The defense lawyer they were given said foolish things that was no defense at all.

The judges' dais looked like a stage. The communist judge with his serious demeanor sat in the center. To his right and left sat two female judges who served as representatives of the people. These two judges were young ladies in their twenties. That was Soviet justice.

The judge banged with his gavel and began to officiously read:

"Shmuel Pruss and Yosef Motchkin are found guilty of the crime of 'Chassidism, Zionism, and being counter-revolutionaries.' Aside from this, Shmuel is guilty of concealing money in order to

finance anti-Soviet activities.

Therefore, we sentence Shmuel to ten years of hard labor and Yosef to five years of labor."

The judge rose from his place and left the room.

PART II

For many years, Shmuel Pruss – or as he was known among the Chassidim, Mulle – was dedicated to spreading Judaism. He raised money for Talmudei Torah, paid the salaries of melamdin, built secret mikvaos, supported the wives of Chassidim who were imprisoned for the "crime" of spreading Judaism, and other "revolutionary" activities.

The NKVD searched for him for months. He was on the wanted list ever since that black night when numerous Chassidim in Leningrad were arrested. He escaped and the authorities frantically searched for him, though he repeatedly evaded their clutches. He fled from city to

city, hiding in the home of one Chassid or another, until he felt that things had calmed down somewhat and then he emerged from his hiding place.

One day they caught him when he went to the train station to meet his brother-in-law who had arrived from Chelyabinsk. They didn't even know who he was when they arrested him; simply spotting a religious Jew with a beard was reason enough to arrest him. It was later on, in the NKVD offices that they identified him. For weeks, Mulle went through exhausting nighttime interrogations that broke a man's body and spirit. Mulle was not the type to be frightened by these cursed people though, and when they saw that they couldn't extract anything worthwhile from him, they put him on trial.

Mulle sat in jail for two months until he was sent to a labor camp in Asia, very far from the center of Russia. His friend Yoske Mochkin was sent there too. "Two are better than one," and in that terrible place they supported one another in all their wars to observe Shabbos, keep a beard, and eat kosher food.

They rejoiced when they met another Chassid in the camp, an old friend by the name of Yisroel Kook.

Mulle was put to work in the weaving factory. Dozens of

weaving machines were placed next to one another and the work was exceedingly difficult. These weren't modern electric machines. Mother Russia wouldn't benefit from those capitalistic inventions, so these were wooden machines and in order to operate them you had to use your hands and feet simultaneously. Even strong young men were tired out by this grueling work. The "brigadiers," who were the foremen, were not unduly impressed and the machines worked all day in two shifts, with each shift working twelve hours straight.

Mulle knew that he wouldn't last long in such arduous work. G-d placed some compassion in the heart of the foreman who saw that Mulle was weak and turned a blind eye every so often.

Their food rations did not contribute towards their health. The more productive laborers received 800 grams of bread on every workday while those who couldn't keep up were given only 400 grams of stale bread. No wonder then that the prisoners died off rapidly with over sixty men dying every day.

Aside from these untenable conditions there was also an ongoing fight for existence among the prisoners as to who would live

and who would die, who in his allotted time and who not in his allotted time. If that wasn't enough, a prisoner was broken emotionally as his thoughts wandered to his family who didn't know where he was.

PART III

The holidays were approaching. Someone managed to smuggle a shofar into the camp and on Rosh HaShana the Chassidim blew it in some corner of the vast camp. There was no minyan for Yom Kippur for there were only three Chassidim in the camp. Somehow or other they got out of work and stood and davened in different places so the wicked ones wouldn't lay eyes on them.

Mulle chose an old barracks. It was a long structure divided into two large rooms with each room sleeping about a hundred prisoners in bunk beds that were crowded together. Nearly all the prisoners were at work at the time and only he stood there in the narrow passageway near the window, pouring out his heart to his Creator.

He had no machzor; he tried to recite the holiday prayers from memory: "Inform forgiveness to the starved soul, extract them from the

depths of the pit." These few words summed up his situation and expressed his feelings. "Today will be written in the book of remembrance, of life and death, please...rise up, plead and arouse mercy for the soul" – he couldn't help but remember the dozens of prisoners who were buried daily around the camp.

He couldn't restrain himself and burst into tears. He didn't pay attention to what was going on in the barracks nor did he notice a *natchalnik* who stood and watched him in fascination. Mulle forgot that the routine patrol checked the barracks at midday. The *natchalnik* stood there for over half an hour and watched him until he came to himself, glanced around the room and left without saying a word.

"If only I would daven nowadays with the same feeling of inspiration as I did that Yom Kippur," Mulle said years later.

PART IV

Yom Kippur was past and Sukkos, "the Time of our Rejoicing" was approaching, but Mulle looked sad. What would he do about a sukka? Did being in a labor camp exempt him from mitzvot? No! What about cruel overseers watching his every move?



R' Yoske Motchkin



At a Hachnasas Seifer Torah donated by Rabbi Pruss

Hashem is watching him!

A Chassid, even when mitigating circumstances place him in the category of an *ahnus*, who is exempt from mitzvos, does not forgo the mitzva of sukka, which is why Mulle wondered where he would get boards and s'chach from.

* * *

Avrohom was the name of the Georgian Jew who had also been exiled to the camp for various crimes. He wasn't an observant Jew and he knew very little about Torah and mitzvos from what he had seen and heard in his youth. His job was sewing hats for all the commanders in the camp. He had a special room where he did the sewing. He did good work and had a good reputation for hat-making. Even army officers in the nearby city would order hats especially from him. He had good connections among the natchalniks in the time-honored tradition of "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

Aside from hat-making, Avrohom was the head of the underground among the prisoners. They ran things in the camp as if it belonged to them; they punished and rewarded, murdered or granted clemency, built or destroyed. Fortunately for the two Chassidim, they had an excellent relationship with him. Apparently his Jewish spark burned deep in his heart and soul and this is what connected him and them even though they came from separate worlds.

When Avrohom noticed Mulle's downcast look, he asked him what was wrong. Mulle told him that Sukkos was approaching and he needed a sukka but had no way of building one. Avrohom asked him how a sukka is built and Mulle explained the laws.

Avrohom thought for a moment and then said, "Don't you worry, you'll have a sukka!"

Avrohom immediately got "his men" to work and within a few hours they brought him everything he needed: boards, wooden poles and ropes for s'chach. The little sukka was built in the middle of the night next to the window of Avrohom's room and he took all responsibility for it. An electric line was run from his room out to the sukka.

When the sukka was complete, Mulle was called to check it out. It was fine. "What else do you need?" asked Avrohom good-naturedly.

"Vodka," said Mulle. "On Sukkos we make Kiddush!"

PART V

It was ten o'clock at night and pitch black outside. Only the distant workrooms where the second shift worked were lit up. The members of the first shift had fallen into bed after their twelve-hour stint. Soldiers and guards were in their places.

One by one, Mulle, Avrohom, and Yoske entered the sukka. The two Chassidim davened the Yom Tov Maariv, quietly humming the holiday tunes. Then they made Kiddush over vodka in a tin cup, both of which had been provided by Avrohom's men. The cup had been made in the metal factory. From somewhere they had gotten a salted fish and cooked potatoes.

The Chassidim began singing joyous holiday songs. One niggun

followed another and the three of them forgot the soldiers and bloodthirsty dogs. They were climbing to great spiritual heights and they forgot that at midnight the natchalniks checked the rooms to make sure everything was as it should be.

In the middle of a niggun a head poked its way in the door and a natchalnik entered the little sukka. He was a cruel fellow and he looked at the threesome derisively as though to say, "I've gotten myself some fat fish in my net."

This natchalnik was a senior officer in the army. He had commanded thousands of soldiers until he was wounded on the front and was sent to the prisoners' camp, where his work would entail less effort. He was known for his ruthlessness and all trembled before him.

Mulle, who had drunk plenty of mashke, didn't understand what danger they were in. "Come comrade-officer," he called out merrily. "You know today is Sukkos, come and make Kiddush in honor of the day," and he poured vodka into the tin cup. "Nu, make Kiddush," he urged.

The others didn't know where to bury themselves, so great was their fear. The situation had gotten much worse. Mulle's invitation had surprised even the natchalnik. No prisoner had ever spoken to him like that. He approached the table, took the cup from Mulle, looked at

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him for a moment and then began to recite the Kiddush with the holiday tune, “Baruch ata Hashem Elokeinu Melech ha’olam...”

Only Mulle wasn’t shocked. He regarded it matter-of-factly in his inebriated state. He poured again and said to the natchalnik, “Take some more, this time say l’chaim.” The natchalnik took the cup again and drank it down. He ate some of the food too.

The mashke went to his head and he was in a good mood, but he was careful not to sit with the prisoners. He remained standing but he began to review different

concepts in one of the more difficult sections of tractate Bava Basra, known as Chezkas HaBatim.

“I am a Jew, and I attended yeshiva in my youth. I studied Torah and knew how to daven. When I grew up I joined the army, where I neglected my religious life. I served in the Russian army for many years and I climbed the ranks, until I became a general. I completely forgot my Judaism. It has been years since I’ve thought about my being Jewish or about Jews.

“When I went out tonight for the routine check, as I do every

night, I heard a niggun. I followed the sound and found this little sukka. Sukka? Sukkos? In a prisoners’ camp? I couldn’t believe it.

“I remembered Sukkos, the sukka in my father’s home, the sukka I sat in, in my youth. Many years have passed since then. When you asked me to make Kiddush, I immediately remembered what it is and somehow managed to remember the words and the tune.”

Silence fell in the little sukka. Each person was lost in his thoughts and busy with the emotions stirred up by this astounding discovery.

“Now leave the sukka and go to sleep,” said the natchalnik, breaking in on their thoughts. “If I’ll be caught here with you, they will send me to exile too, an exile from which I will not return.”

They finished their meal, got up, and went to bed in their barracks.

(from a personal interview with R’ Mulle)



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